

## *Parthenocissus tricuspidata* 'Fenway Park'

*Peter Del Tredici*

The 'Fenway Park' cultivar of Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) is unique in producing yellow-green foliage throughout the growing season. It originated from a mutant branch on a normal specimen of Boston ivy that was growing on the west-facing wall of an apartment complex a few blocks from Fenway Park, in Boston, Massachusetts. I discovered the plant one evening in September of 1988 while walking to a Red Sox baseball game with my son. The sun was just setting and the upper portions of the ivy-covered building seemed to glow in the fading light. Looking more closely, I saw that the upper portions of the vine—mostly green elsewhere—had bright yellow leaves. A few weeks later I returned to the site, and with the cooperation of the building's superintendent I collected eighty-one cuttings from the yellow portion of the plant, which appeared to be a "bud-sport" mutation on what was otherwise a typical Boston ivy. The sport had originated at the level of the third story and eventually produced a branch that covered the entire right-hand corner of the building. (The entire plant—yellow sport and all—was removed from the building in the late 1990s.)

I took the cuttings of the yellow sport to the Arboretum, where they were accessioned under the number 865-88, treated with a powdered rooting hormone, and placed under intermittent mist in a heated greenhouse. Only a few of the



eighty-one cuttings rooted over the course of the fall, but they produced enough new growth to provide fifty-seven softwood cuttings on 12 January 1989. After being treated with rooting powder and placed under a polyethylene tent, most of these cuttings generated new roots within a few weeks. This is a typical pattern for



many plants in which the “mature” cuttings taken from the original plant root slowly and in low percentages, while second-generation “juvenile” cuttings root quickly and in high percentages.

The name ‘Fenway Park’ was assigned to the plant on 23 August 1991 after John F. Donovan, Executive Vice President and Counsel for the Boston Red Sox, granted the Arboretum permission to “use the name ‘Fenway Park’ in conjunction with commercialization of the plant.” By the spring of 1992 we had produced over a thousand containerized plants of ‘Fenway Park’ and distributed them to a number of nurseries for evaluation and further propagation. Despite this distribution, the plant remained more or less invisible to the gardening public until 1997–1998, when it was finally listed in a few mail-order nursery catalogs. It hit the big time in the fall of 2002, when it appeared with a color illustration in the *Wayside Gardens* catalog. In spring 2003, Plant Delights owner Tony Avent referred to it as “the top conversation piece in our garden.” ‘Fenway Park’ was formally described in 1998 in the *Combined Proceedings of the International Plant Propagators Society* 48: 658–659.

The most salient characteristic of ‘Fenway Park’ is the color of its leaves during the growing season, which can vary from yellow to chartreuse depending on the amount of light the plant receives. When grown in full sun, the color comes close to the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) yellow-green 151A to C; in shade, it is a uniform lime green (RHS 154C to D). This coloration has remained stable throughout the fifteen years that ‘Fenway Park’ has been propagated. In the fall, the plant’s foliage turns brilliant shades of orange, scarlet, and yellow, which is typical of the species.

The distal portion of the oldest leaves of ‘Fenway Park’ may lose all their chlorophyll, making them susceptible to sunscald, especially during hot, dry summers. For this reason, the plant is best grown on a north- or west-facing wall. ‘Fenway Park’ is hardy within USDA hardiness zones 4 through 9 and is often used as a climbing vine to brighten up walls, fences, or buildings that are located in dark, shady places.

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