



Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed

Chamerion latifolium

Selected Class Release “Natural”

Uses: Revegetation Throughout Alaska

Background Information

Dwarf fireweed grows on sandy riverbars, roadsides, and foothills (Hunt and Moore, 2003). It grows where the soil is dry to medium-wet.

Chamerion latifolium is a perennial. It can grow to 30 cm high but normally is found between 10 and 20 cm high. It has wider, fleshier leaves than the common fireweed.

Another common name for *Chamerion latifolium* is “river beauty”, representing both where it is usually found and the appearance of the flower. Many times the flower is not just a brilliant pink, but has white stripes. Flowers with this characteristic are called candy-striped.

This species is an aggressive colonizer, invading cleared areas where it may survive for many years (Aiken, et. al, 1999).



Map from Hultén, 1968.
Used with the permission of Stanford University Press.



Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed seed is maintained by the Alaska Plant Materials Center for commercial production.

Distribution

According to Walsh (1974), *Chamerion latifolium* can be found throughout most of Alaska, the Yukon, Canada, Asia, Greenland, and south in the U.S. to South Dakota and northern California. It is circumboreal.

Kobuk Germplasm

Plant Identification Number: 9097724

Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed was collected in 1996 by Stoney Wright. The original source was located in the sandy, coastal region near Kotzebue (Wright, 2006).

This native forb is a Selected Class Release by the Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC). This means it has been grown and harvested at the PMC and continues to exhibit excellent performance.

This forb is recommended for use in revegetation because its seedlings are vigorous and able to survive in dry areas at many different elevations. Its vibrant pink color enhances the visual effects of the finished project.

Interesting Notes

This species is the official flower of Greenland. It is called *niviaqsiq*, meaning “young girl” (Aiken, et. al, 1999).

Moerman (1988) stated that the leaves of *Chamerion latifolium* have been eaten by Alaskan natives historically.

Beekeepers find this species to be one of the best sources for nectar (Aiken, et. al, 1999).

Alaska Plant Materials Center
Serving Alaska’s needs in production of Alaska native plants

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Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed



Kobuk Germplasm dwarf fireweed for Alaska Revegetation Purposes

Kobuk grows easily and quickly in most situations, although slower than most grasses used for revegetation purposes.

When the grass seed mix is spread evenly and Kobuk is at least 5% by weight of the seed mix, dwarf fireweed should perform vigorously and eventually contribute to the revegetation results.

Its inflorescence of intensely pink flowers adds to the visual appeal of roadside revegetation projects. A natural perennial colonizer, dwarf fireweed will help stabilize the soil and live for several years.



Kobuk in production at the Alaska Plant Materials Center, Palmer, Alaska.



*Chamerion latifolium seed.
~6,000,000 seeds per pound
It is estimated that each pod contains 300-500 seeds
and that each flowering stem produces about 80,000
seeds (Aiken, et. al, 1999).*

To Produce Kobuk

Conventional farm equipment is needed. A drill for seeding to a depth of ~1/4 inch is recommended. Soil should be moderately well-drained.

Seed may be sown in either fall or spring. A fall seeding replicates natural conditions in Alaska and tends to encourage faster germination (Hunt and Moore, 2003).

Cultural practices of light irrigation, cultivation of weeds, and fertilization should enhance growth.

Collection of seeds begins when the capsule starts to show signs of splitting. Let the fluff and seeds air dry. So as not to damage the seed, but remove the fluff, cleaning consists of three steps: brush cleaner, hand screen, and air separator (Hunt and Moore, 2003).

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Flower color variations range from pink to white. Bees pollinate dwarf fireweed from the bottom of the flowering spike then upwards. This is because the flowers at the bottom secrete more nectar.

References

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