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Paquette

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(54) **SPIRAEA PLANT NAMED ‘GOLDEN ELF’**

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patent is extended or adjusted under 35
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(58) **Field of Search** Plt./226

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A new and distinct variety of *Spiraea japonica* named
‘Golden Elf’ that is characterized by a dwarf plant habit, a
miniature aspect of the leaves, attractive golden leaf coloration
from spring to first frost, a smooth and compact canopy,
disease and insect tolerance and does not flower. The new
variety is particularly interesting as a hardy outdoor ground
cover for garden decoration and landscape use.

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

P.P. 7,537 * 5/1991 Catt Plt./226

1 Drawing Sheet

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a new and distinct variety
of *Spiraea japonica* that originated as a naturally occurring
branch mutation discovered by the inventor on a plant of
Spiraea japonica ‘Goldmound’ (not patented) in a cultivated
area of St.-Paul d’Abbotsford, Quebec, Canada. The first
asexual reproduction of the new cultivar was by softwood
cuttings taken by the inventor in St.-Paul d’Abbotsford,
Quebec, Canada. ‘Golden Elf’ was propagated by softwood
cuttings and the best young plant selections were chosen for
evaluation. This selection process was repeated twice more
until a final selection was chosen. Thus, the hundred of
plants obtained have shown that the unique features of this
new *Spiraea* are stabilized and are reproduced true to type in
successive propagations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The new variety ‘Golden Elf’ was observed over four
subsequent years to determine the stability of characteristics
and growing behavior in plant container production, plant
field production and landscaping. The following
observations, measurements, values and comparisons
describe the plants as grown in St.-Paul-d’Abbotsford,
Quebec, Canada under outdoor conditions that generally
exist in commercial horticulture and also closely resemble
conditions in garden practice.

The following characteristics have been repeatedly
observed and are determined to be basic characteristics of
‘Golden Elf’, which in combination, distinguish this *Spiraea*
from the cultivar ‘Goldmound’ and distinguish it as a new
and distinct cultivar:

1. A dwarf plant habit. Plants of ‘Goldmound’ are gener-
ally six times as tall as plants of ‘Golden Elf’. ‘Golden Elf’
therefore has a ground cover type habit as an attribute.

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2. A miniature aspect of leaves. Leaves of plants of
‘Golden Elf’ are four times smaller than leaves of ‘Gold-
mound’.
3. An attractive golden leaf coloration. Leaves of plants of
‘Golden Elf’ maintain their golden color from spring to first
frost, especially if grown in full sun. As compared to the
leaves of the cultivar ‘Goldmound’ which only retains its
attractive golden leaf color until the end of the summer.
During the fall period, the leaves of ‘Goldmound’ become
dull and dark, regardless of light level.
4. A smooth and compact aspect to the canopy. The nature
of the canopy of ‘Goldmound’ is rough and more open.
5. Disease and insect tolernace. Plants of ‘Golden Elf’ are
definitely less affected by diseases and insects than the
cultivar ‘Goldmound’.
6. Golden Elf does not produce flowers. Plants of ‘Gold-
mound’ exhibit a profuse flowering habit.
- The new variety has exhibited good hardiness and has
survived without injury when overwintered in containers
above ground and in the landscape in St-Paul-d’Abbotsford.
‘Golden Elf’ is considered hardy to Canadian zone 3 (–34.5°
to –40° C.).
- A detailed camparison of the cultivars ‘Golden Elf’ and
‘Goldmound’ appears in Table A at the end of the specifi-
cation.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The accompanying photographs illustrate the overall
appearance of the new variety, showing the colors as true as
it is reasonably possible by conventional photography.

The photograph at the top of sheet one shows a detailed
view of the leaves of ‘Golden Elf’.

The bottom photo on sheet one is a photograph of three
plants of ‘Golden Elf’ that illustrate growth throughout the
growing season and the consistency of the foliage.

BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PLANT

The following description of the new cultivar is based on five year old plants grown in the landscape and on two year old plants produced in containers in St-Paul-d'Abbotsford. Plants were grown under outdoor conditions with average day temperatures ranging from 10° to 28° C. and average night temperatures ranging from 6° to 18° C. from April to November. Color references are made to The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart except where general color terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used.

Type: Hardy outdoor ground cover for garden decoration and landscape use.

Botanical classification: *Spiraea japonica* cultivar 'Golden Elf'.

Parentage: A naturally occurring branch mutation of *Spiraea japonica* 'Goldmound' (not patented).

Propagation:

A. Type.—By softwood cuttings.

B. Time to initiate roots, summer.—10 to 12 days at temperatures of 25° to 30° C.

Time to develop roots, summer.—45 to 50 days at temperatures of 25° to 30° C.

C. Root description.—Fibrous and branching.

Crop time: A 2 gallon container from a 2½" rooted plug will finish in 12 months when grown outdoors.

Plant description:

A. General appearance.—Deciduous ground cover. Low growing (15 to 20 cm) and spreading habit. In the northern hemisphere, shoots are brown and leaves are bright gold especially under full sunlight. Under partial shade, mature leaves are simply gold RHS number upper 2A, lower 2B; under dense shade, mature leaves are greenish gold RHS number upper 149B, lower 149C. Does not produce flowers.

B. Stem description.—Habit. — Upright and zigzag twig character. All lateral stems grow in an upright habit giving a shaggy mat aspect. Color. — Young and mature stems are in the greyed-orange group, 175A. Length. — 12–18 cm. Diameter. — 0.75–1.5

mm Texture. — Glabrous. Internode Length. — 0.5 to 1.0 cm.

C. Foliage description.—Type. — Deciduous. The leaves are not exactly typical of the species, they are egg-shaped with an obtuse base and apex. Serration is single and fairly regular. Young leaves are concave along central vein and mature leaves are flat. Leaf texture is smooth and veins a little prominent on the under side. Petiole. — Small, approximately 1.5 to 2 mm on average on both young and mature leaves. The young petiole coloration is in the greyed-red group, 179C and mature petiole coloration is in the greyed-orange group, 175A. Color. — Upper side of young and mature leaves fully expanded are in the yellow group 2A and under side are in the yellow group 2B.

D. Flowers.—Does not produce flowers.

E. Disease resistance.—Diseases such as cylindrosporian and septorian leaf spots are very seldom observed Aphid infestation is rarely observed as well.

F. Fruit.—Fruit production has not been observed.

TABLE A

DIMENSIONS	'GOLDEN ELF'	'GOLDMOUND'
PLANT HEIGHT (cm)	15–20	90–110
PLANT WIDTH (cm)	50–60	105–115
PETIOLE LENGTH (mm)	1.5–2.0	1.5–2.0
PETIOLE DIAMETER (mm)	0.5–1.0	1.0–1.5
LEAF LENGTH (mm)	8–11	44–47
LEAF WIDTH (mm)	5–6	20–24

I claim:

1. A new and distinct cultivar of *Spiraea japonica* plant named 'Golden Elf', as illustrated and described.

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