

Course Planting That Paints Autumn Picture

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A WHILE ago I suggested that in choosing trees and shrubs for the home environment we should choose first those with good form and good foliage. If we are careful in our choice we can often combine good form and foliage with good spring flowers and good autumn color. Now, I shall name and give the autumn color of 57 varieties of trees and shrubs of this kind, i. e., plants which are attractive the year round. I want it understood that my 57 varieties are arrived at by actual count and not by any chance reference to Heinz's pickles. I shall make only occasional comment as to the other good qualities of the 57 varieties and shall try to save time at the end to speak of 10 other plants which are essentially specialists in autumn color. These plants stand out because of their brilliancy and any talk on autumn colors should include them. In order that you may more easily utilize this discussion of autumn colors and apply it directly to your landscape needs, I shall group the 57 varieties into seven size groups, beginning with large trees and ending with climbing vines.

GROUP 7, which is large trees 50-100 feet high, contains the following:

Red Maple—Usually red, but sometimes yellow.

Norway Maple—Yellow.

Sugar Maple—Usually red, but sometimes yellow.

Horse-chestnut—Yellow.

Canoe or Paper Birch—Yellow. This, of course, has a beautiful white trunk. I consider it the best of all the white birches, first, because of its beauty, and secondly, because it is not infested by the birch borer so much as is the European white birch. This tree has been planted a great deal, but we do not recommend it now because it is so subject to borers. If you do not want white trunks, then use the *Black or Cherry Birch*. This has yellow autumn color like that of the Canoe birch, but the trunk is black.

American Beech—Golden brown.

Shagbark Hickory—Golden brown.

White Oak—Purple-red.

Scarlet Oak—Scarlet.

Red Oak—Red.

American Elm—Yellow.

In looking back over this tree list one sees that the Horse-chestnut is the only one which is very showy in flower. The Red Maple is very interesting because of its early red, both of the flowers which are early and appear in April before the leaves, and also of the young fruits, which are even brighter than the flowers. The fact is we do not have many northern trees which are showy in flower and also dependable at other seasons of the year. The plants in my list are all quite tough and durable (except the Birches), and all of them have good form and foliage as well as attractive autumn color.

The group of trees which I have just discussed I have called Group 7. The next group is Group 6, which is composed of large shrubs or small trees from 10-25 feet tall. There is one very desirable tree which I must speak of at this point because it is really in between these two size groups. This tree is called Yellowwood, because the inner wood happens to be yellow. It is a medium size tree about 40 feet high, with beautiful yellow autumn color. The flowers are white, in handsome clusters like Wisteria, and the foliage is a good green all summer. The tree is a native of the Southern states, but it is hardy north. It has a short trunk and spreading branches which are smooth and gray, much like that of our Northern Beech.

The 10-25 Ft. High Group

GROUP 6, large shrubs or small trees 10-25 feet high, contains the following:

Spicebush—Yellow. This bush grows well in wet soil.

Redbud or Judas Tree—Yellow.

Flowering Dogwood—Red. This is excellent in shade.

Washington Thorn—Red. This has beautiful red berries all winter.

*Courtesy Extension Service News.

Witchhazel—Yellow. This is excellent in shade.

Sourwood or Tree Andromeda—Dark red. This is a slender, graceful tree with small white flowers in terminal clusters in summer.

European Wayfaring Tree—Red. This is one of the *Viburnums*, *Viburnum lantana*.

Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum opulus*)—Red.

Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*)—Red.

GROUP 5, medium shrubs, 6-8 feet high, still above the eye level.

Note—This group contains many very handsome flowering and fruiting plants. Oftentimes we do not want them to grow up so high. In this case, it is entirely possible to keep them gradually cut back (mostly by occasional thinning out of old stems) so that they still flower and fruit each year, but are small enough for our purpose.

Red Chokeberry—Red. This has bright red berries all winter.

Torch Azalea—Dull red. This is a red-flowered Japanese Azalea. Its scientific name is *Azalea kaempferi*.

Flame Azalea—I am not sure about the autumn color of this plant. If I remember rightly, it is yellow to orange and reddish purple. This is a Southern plant which is perfectly hardy North. The flowers are a perfect mass of yellow to red. Its scientific name is *Azalea calendulacea*.

Pinkshell Azalea (*Azalea vaseyi*)—Purple red. This is another Southern plant with very dainty and very early flowers. You must remember that all Azaleas need a neutral or acid soil. They will not stand lime.

Redstem Dogwood—Red.

Graystem Dogwood—Purple red. This has the finest texture of any of the bushy dogwoods. By this, I mean its leaves and twigs are small. It is very desirable. The berries are white on pink stems.

Regel Privet—Reddish purple.

Winter Honeysuckle—Green. This plant is semi-evergreen with thick leaves which remain green until December. Its flowers are white and very fragrant in early April.

Flowering Currant—Red. This is excellent in dry soil.

Japanese Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)—Reddish. This has abundant white flowers in spring and attractive berries all winter.

Bridal Wreath—Glossy red. This is the

old *Spiraea prunifolia* with small double white flowers.

Van Houtte's Spirea—Reddish.

Arrowwood—Glossy red.

Doublefile Viburnum—Dark velvety red. This shrub has very horizontal branching with attractive white flowers and red berries. A double form of this plant is called the Japanese Snowball.

GROUP 4, shrubs, 3-5 feet high:

Pinxterbloom—Reddish. This is the common pink Azalea in New York State. It is smaller than the other Azaleas just mentioned, but even it will sometimes get over the head in height.

Japanese Barberrry—Scarlet.

Japanese Quince—I do not think this shrub colors up in the fall. Its foliage all summer is a dark glossy green. The flowers are usually red before the leaves in spring. There are other varieties with different colored flowers.

Leatherwood—Yellow.

Kerria—Light yellow. This has bright green stems all winter.

Bayberry—This holds its green leaves very late. They finally bronze and fall in December. The sexes are separate on this plant. If the plant is a fruiting plant, it will have beautiful gray berries all winter. Those who live near Rochester will remember seeing this plant in Highland Park as large as a lilac. It may be restrained easily by removing old stems.

Virginia Rose (*Rosa lucida*)—Red. This I consider the best of our wild pink roses. It has shining leaves.

Rugosa Rose (*Rosa rugosa*)—Beautiful orange. This is a Japanese rose with large flowers and fruits and very dark wrinkled foliage. Few people know its value in autumn color. Watch it.

Thunberg Spirea—Reddish, changing to a beautiful brown. This has very delicate feathery foliage which remains green longer than other shrubs. It is one of the first spireas to bloom in the spring.

Mapleleaf Viburnum—Rosy purple. This is excellent for shade.

Fragrant Viburnum—Brilliant red. This plant is from Korea. It is very fragrant and is the first *Viburnum* to bloom.

GROUP 3, shrubs, 1½-2 feet high:

Rock Cotoneaster—Red. This is a very attractive shrub with horizontal branches, excellent on a bank or in the rock garden. Its leaves color late and its bright red berries remain all winter.

GROUP 2, ground cover plants, 6-12 inches high:

A real ground cover plant should be evergreen, like *Common Myrtle* or *English Ivy* or *Creeping Juniper* and the like. There are only a few low deciduous plants which are suitable as ground cover material. I mention only three, as follows:

Running Euonymus—Reddish. This comes into fresh green leaf very early in the spring. For this reason it has been used sometimes as ground cover under Azaleas to give a background for their early flowers.

Memorial Rose—Green. This is almost half evergreen. The leaves are dark and glossy and much better than other hardy roses in this respect. It is a distinctly low trailing type with very attractive single white flowers in spring.

GROUP 1, clinging vines:

Virginia Creeper or *Fiveleaf Ivy*—Red.

Japanese or *Boston Ivy*—Red. This sticks to stone or brick better than any other vine.

American Bittersweet—Yellow. This has beautiful orange berries if you get a fruiting plant. The sexes are separate just as in Bayberry.

Sweet Autumn Clematis—Green. This is the finest of all vines for fall flower, which is very abundant and white and fragrant. Its leaves remain green very late.

Hall's Japanese Honeysuckle—Green. This also holds its leaves very late and is often evergreen further South. It has very fragrant white flowers, fading yellow in summer.

Chinese Wisteria—Yellow. This is not so valuable in autumn color, but is very satisfactory in summer foliage and is the finest value of all for spring flower, which is lavender in hanging clusters.

Ten Autumn Color Leaders

The ten plants which I have spoken of as specialists in autumn colors are as follows:

GROUP 7, large trees:

Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)—Yellow. This has a peculiar fanshape leaf which is deeply notched at the tip. The sexes are separate in this tree. The fruit is very oily and putrefies quickly; therefore, one should plant only male trees.

Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar*)—Red. This is a Southern tree, hardy North. It has star-shape leaves which color very brilliantly in the fall.

Tulip Tree, *Tulip Poplar*, or *Whitewood* (*Liriodendron*)—Yellow. This has very handsome glossy leaves, but the wood is

too brittle for children to climb or for planting in exposed places where storms will break it.

Sassafras—Brilliant red. This has leaves which are sometimes entire, mitten-shape or three-lobed on the same branch.

GROUP 6, large shrubs or small trees:

Amur Maple (*Acer ginnala*)—Bright red. This makes a low bushy tree like a field thorn, but not so dense. It is even more brilliant than *Flowering Dogwood*, but, of course, it is not so valuable at other seasons.

Striped Maple (*Acer pennsylvanicum*)—Yellow. This has large leaves resembling goose feet and dark green bark with white stripes. It is excellent in shade.

Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)—Red. This is a coarse shrub for distant appreciation, but very beautiful at this time of the year. The large fruit clusters are red and conspicuous on the ends of the stems, but the sexes are separate, and, therefore, fruiting plants must be secured.

GROUP 5, medium shrubs:

Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*)—Bright red. This also has bright fruits resembling Bittersweet. The scarlet fruits plus the red leaves make this a very bright show in the fall. The shrub is very dense and symmetrical and the twigs are marked with narrow ridges of cork.

Shining Sumac (*Rhus copallina*)—Red. This is a very handsome sumac with glossy foliage. The leaves are compound like a feather and the midrib is winged.

GROUP 4, small shrubs.

Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus canadensis*)—Red. This is a low sumac with three leaflets like a big clover leaf. It is excellent for poor dry soil in the sun and especially valuable at road intersections because it is below the eye level and will not interfere with the view.

At this point let me remind you that some evergreens should be used in almost all landscape plantings. They are permanent and, if rightly placed, will create a framework and background that will pull the whole picture together and make it satisfactory at all times of the year. Right now in these bright autumn days the combination of evergreens with autumn colors is wonderful. Our students here at Ithaca are seeing, every day, the value of white pines, hemlocks, and red cedars, not only as background for autumn colors, but also as dark framework through which these glimpses of bright colors are intensified and made very attractive.