

# Fall LANDSCAPE COLOR

**Spring isn't the only time for colorful plantings.**

BY JAMIE J. GOOCH

**F**ALL COLOR doesn't just grow on trees. Perennials and ornamentals can be combined to provide clients with late-season showiness in containers and beds.

Plant breeders continue to improve the color options available to landscapers, as well as the length of bloom time, so there are many options. Even tried-and-true fall performers such as Asters and Chrysanthemums are available in new colors, sizes and shapes. That may be the most difficult aspect of adding late-season color: deciding on the right plants.

## Plants of the year

There are thousands of perennials and ornamentals to choose from, but you can narrow them down by beginning with plants tested by associations and botanical gardens. One such association, the Perennial Plant Association (PPA), has chosen *Amsonia hubrichtii* as its



'Glamour Red' kale can provide color all winter in some climates.

2011 perennial of the year.

*Amsonia hubrichtii*, also known as 'Arkansas Bluestar', provides three seasons of interest in zones 4 through 9. Even after its clusters of light-blue, star-shaped blooms fade in spring, the plant's feathery foliage takes over. The green, fern-like foliage turns bright

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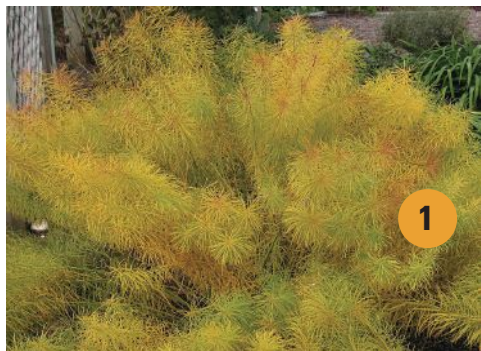


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**1** *Amsonia hubrichtii* has wispy green foliage that turns bright yellow in the fall.



**2** *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola' stands out for its cascading yellow blades.



**3** *Gaillardia x grandiflora* will bloom into early autumn.



yellow in the fall. It mounds to 3 ft. high by 3 ft. wide, so it works well in the landscape when massed together and combined with ornamental grasses.

Speaking of ornamental grasses, the variety of foliage colors and heights make them a great addition to a late-season landscape. In 2009, PPA awarded its plant of the year award to *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola,' an ornamental grass also known as Golden Japanese Forest Grass. It has variegated yellow blades with green stripes. Unlike many grasses, it has a cascading growth habit that causes the leaves to arch in the same direction. During the fall the yellow blades of grass take on shades of pink.

### AAS award winners

Another organization that tests and recommends perennials is All-America Selections (AAS). Its 2011 winners include two cultivars with late-season appeal: *Gaillardia* 'Arizona Apricot' and 'Glamour Red' ornamental kale.

*Gaillardia* 'Arizona Apricot' has blooms with yellow edges that deepen to an apricot in the center. AAS judges noted the distinctive color of the 3 to 3.5 in. daisy-like flowers.

"Just 105 days after sowing seed, this *Gaillardia x grandiflora* will bloom from early summer into autumn," according to AAS. "The compact 12-in.-tall plants offer bright green foliage and a tidy uniform habit best viewed when planted to the front of the flower bed."

This long-flowering perennial is hardy

in USDA zones 2 through 10. It is bred by Ernst Benary of America Inc.

AAS' first winning kale is 'Glamour Red,' which has shiny, waxless leaves with vivid color. The fringed leaf type *Brassica oleracea* has a flower head size of 10 to 12 in.

This full sun annual ornamental will bloom 90 days from sowing seed to first color. Leaf coloring begins when night temperatures fall below 55°F for approximately two weeks, according to AAS. You can expect frost-tolerant blooms from November to March in warmer climates. It is bred by Takii & Co., Ltd.

### Look local

To make sure plants are viable in your area, check with local growers to collect their recommendations. Look through

plant breeders' catalogs and use them as a means to discuss new cultivars with your local nurseries.

If you have a land-grant university nearby, it might work with the Cooperative Extension Service in your region on plant trials. A number of state horticultural societies also test and rate plants. A good list of these can be found on the U.S. National Arboretum site at [usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/pickingplants.html](http://usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/pickingplants.html).

Trees and shrubs don't have to be the only bright spots in your clients' landscapes. With the right research and planning, perennials and ornamentals can bring years of seasonal color. **LM**

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### KEEP IT CLEAN

To ensure late-season color has its chance to shine in the landscape, sell your clients a fall maintenance package. It's important to remove dead plant matter not only for aesthetics, but to decrease the chance of disease. A fall landscape maintenance program can also include:

- ▶ **Mulching** to protect crowns and roots from winter weather.
- ▶ **Dividing** certain perennials to prevent overcrowding.
- ▶ **Staking** tall perennials so that they aren't damaged by wind or heavy snows.
- ▶ **Weeding and fertilization** as necessary.
- ▶ **Planting** containerized perennials or moving them indoors.
- ▶ **Fall pruning** of certain flowering shrubs. —*JG*





### Sound choice

The new Astilbe hybrids 'Hip Hop' and 'New Wave' (pictured) are part of the **Darwin Perennials** Music Collection. Both false spireas feature strong stems and heat tolerance. 'Hip Hop' has an addition of light pink plumes with high-contrast hot pink stamens. 'New Wave' is an upward grower with dark shiny green foliage — with plumes that have a deep, consistent pink on a dark stem. [DarwinPerennials.com](http://DarwinPerennials.com)

### Pure performance

*Salvia farinacea* 'Evolution White' is **Benary's** new silvery white color, with the same performance and compact habit as AAS award winner *Salvia* 'Evolution,' according to the company. Early to flower, 'Evolution White' features bright white blooms for a clean, fresh look in the landscape all season long. [Benary.com](http://Benary.com)



### Baker's delight

Named for its yellow-gold fruit, *Rubus idaeus* 'Fall Gold' is similar to red raspberries in all respects but color. This upright thorny shrub from **Monrovia** provides an abundance of sweet berries from mid-summer to early fall. It offers green foliage throughout the season and is self-pollinating, so it does not require another plant nearby to set fruit. It reaches 4x3 ft., and prefers full sun in zones 3 to 7. [Monrovia.com](http://Monrovia.com)



### Traditional beauty

**David Austin Roses'** repeat-flowering *Rosa* 'The Wedgwood Rose' (Ausjosiah) — offers approximately 70 soft rose pink petals in medium to large blooms. They feature a fruity fragrance on the outer petals, with a clove-like scent at the center. Their ample foliage is dark green and glossy. They work well as a climber — as tall as 10 ft. — or a flowering shrub (about 5x5 ft.). Hardy in USDA zones 5 to 9, they are named for the English pottery company founded by Josiah Wedgwood in 1759. [DavidAustinRoses.com](http://DavidAustinRoses.com)



### Taste of the tropics

**Tesselaar's** 'Tropicanna,' 'Tropicanna Gold' and 'Tropicanna Black' cannas work well in garden borders, backdrops, containers, ponds or water gardens. Featuring variegated, exotic foliage and brilliantly hued blooms (four to eight per stalk), the plants quickly establish into clumps with an upright growth habit. They mature to a height of between 4 and 6 ft., and particularly thrive in USDA zones 7 to 11 — in full sun or partial shade. [Tesselaar.com](http://Tesselaar.com)