

# NATIVE SHRUBS ARE BACKBONE OF LANDSCAPES

## Allspice, Spicebush, Bayberry, and Snowberry

BY DOUGLAS CHAPMAN, "Horticulturist, Dow Gardens, Midland, MI"

Native shrubs should provide the backbone for home and commercial landscapes. Four native shrubs which thrive when grown in full sun or light shade which provide a real diversity to the landscape include Carolina Allspice, Spicebush, Northern Bayberry, and Snowberry. These natives are relatively free of insect and disease problems, will grow in a wide range of soil conditions, and provide color and uniqueness at times when other shrubs are just background.

**Carolina Allspice** (*Calycanthus florida*) is native from Virginia to Florida but grows acceptably as far north as Boston and Central Michigan. It grows well in sun or shade but is usually slightly taller when grown in shady conditions. It is a dense round shrub, reaching 6 to 8 feet in height and 6 to 10 feet in width at maturity but in northern areas it seldom grows over 6 feet in height and width. *Calycanthus* can be transplanted easily during the

spring. It grows in a wide range of soil conditions, thriving in moist, well-drained loamy soils but adapts to well-drained, almost droughty conditions. It has darker green leaves during the summer months, becoming a pale yellow-green in the fall but does not develop effective fall color. The two-inch dark reddish-brown, star-like flowers appear sporadically from late May through June. This star shape is a unique aesthetic trait. Further, these flowers are very fragrant. The urn-shaped fruit (capsule-like at maturity) is not very effective. This shrub is outstanding in native plantings as specimens in the home landscape and mass plantings in large or commercial landscapes.

**Spicebush** (*Lindera benzoin*) is an outstanding shrub, 6 to 10 feet in height and width. It is native from Maine to Florida. *Lindera* is a native shrub which is effective in the home or commercial landscape, in naturalized plantings, specimen, or

used in small groupings. Spicebush thrives in full sun but is acceptable in partial sun. It is a good companion to pine or at the edge of a beech-maple-oak woods. It has been reported to be difficult to transplant because of the coarse roots but we have had 98% success when planting in moist, well-drained, sandy loam. During the spring the light green leaves are oblong, 3 to 5 inches in length. This lime-green foliage of summer is transformed into a rich yellow during fall. This fall color is spectacular. Spicebush flowers very early in the season (late April in Central Michigan). These thread-like flowers, borne in clusters near the terminal, are yellowish-green in color. The fruit which is scarlet and shaped somewhat like raspberries can be spectacular along with the fall foliar color. This native is underused and should be grown more in the trade. Lastly, the leaves and stems are fragrant, just one additional reason to consider culture of this outstanding plant.

**Northern Bayberry** (*Myrica pensylvanica*) is native from Nova Scotia to Pennsylvania mostly along the coast. It is very salt-tolerant (chloide). Bayberry has a long history or association with the development of our country. It was used from colonial times to present in the making of highly aromatic candles (Bayberry candles). This semi-evergreen is perfectly hardy when planted in sandy, well-drained soils. Dirr reports it will exist in the clay soils of Central Illinois. It should be transplanted

*Continues on page 32*



Carolina Allspice has reddish-brown flowers.



Spicebush is a good companion to pine or as an edge of woods.



balled and burlapped during early spring. Bayberry is an outstanding shrub when used in mass plantings associated with pine or broad-leaved evergreens as it has similar requirements. Myrica spreads from root suckers and if planted in full or partial sun will thrive. It will rapidly die out in 50% or more shade. The leaves are a rich dark green. They are oblong, 1½ to 4 inches in length. Bayberry flowers are not particularly effective but the grey fruit which literally lines the one-year old growth can be exciting during the fall. This fruit is usually profuse on one-year old growth. The foliage or branches, when crushed, are extremely fragrant. Although Bayberry has been reported to reach 5 to 12 feet in height and width, we usually find it rarely over 4 to 6 feet in height. Because Myrica spreads by root suckers, it tends to form large clumps and is most effective when used in mass plantings, be it for individual home landscapes or commercial landscapes.

**Common Snowberry** (*Symphoricarpos albus*) has been reported to be of little landscape value, but when noted in the fall with fruit, it is unique yet exciting. This naturalized plant was brought to this country during the late 1800's and can presently be found growing in the Canadian Maritime Provinces to Virginia and west to Minnesota. This dense shrub at maturity has a somewhat upright habit, reaching 3 to 5 feet in height and 2 to 4 feet in width. The leaves are opposite, somewhat honeysuckle in appearance, being a deep blue-green during the summer with no effective fall color. The perfect pink flowers are borne in terminal clusters during June. The white berry-drupe fruit are borne in clusters. They are interesting and afford an opportunity for one to truly enjoy the landscape. Snowberry can be planted in a wide range of soil conditions from sand to clay but prefers well-drained situations. Further, it is a good companion plant when planted at the edges of woods as it

prefers full to medium sun. This shrub when found as understory or a border plant in large area landscapes, commercial landscapes, parks, or home landscapes is exciting. Further, Snowberry has few or no catastrophic insect or disease problems.

The four above-mentioned native shrubs are underused in today's landscapes. They are particularly effective when used in naturalized plantings as specimen shrubs or in mass borders. They are usually most effectively grown in full or partial sun. They have no catastrophic insect and disease problems, are relatively easy to transplant, and will generally decrease maintenance requirements for most landscapes. They are not only exciting for their flower color or fruit but also Spicebush, Carolina Allspice, and Bayberry are exciting when the leaves and stems are crushed, giving off a unique fragrance. These plants truly stimulate all our sense while adding little to maintenance costs. **WTT**

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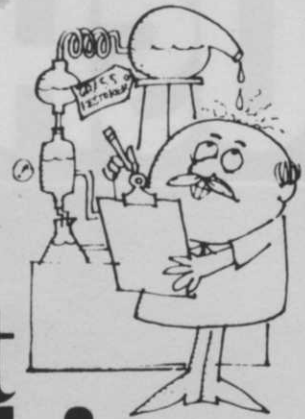
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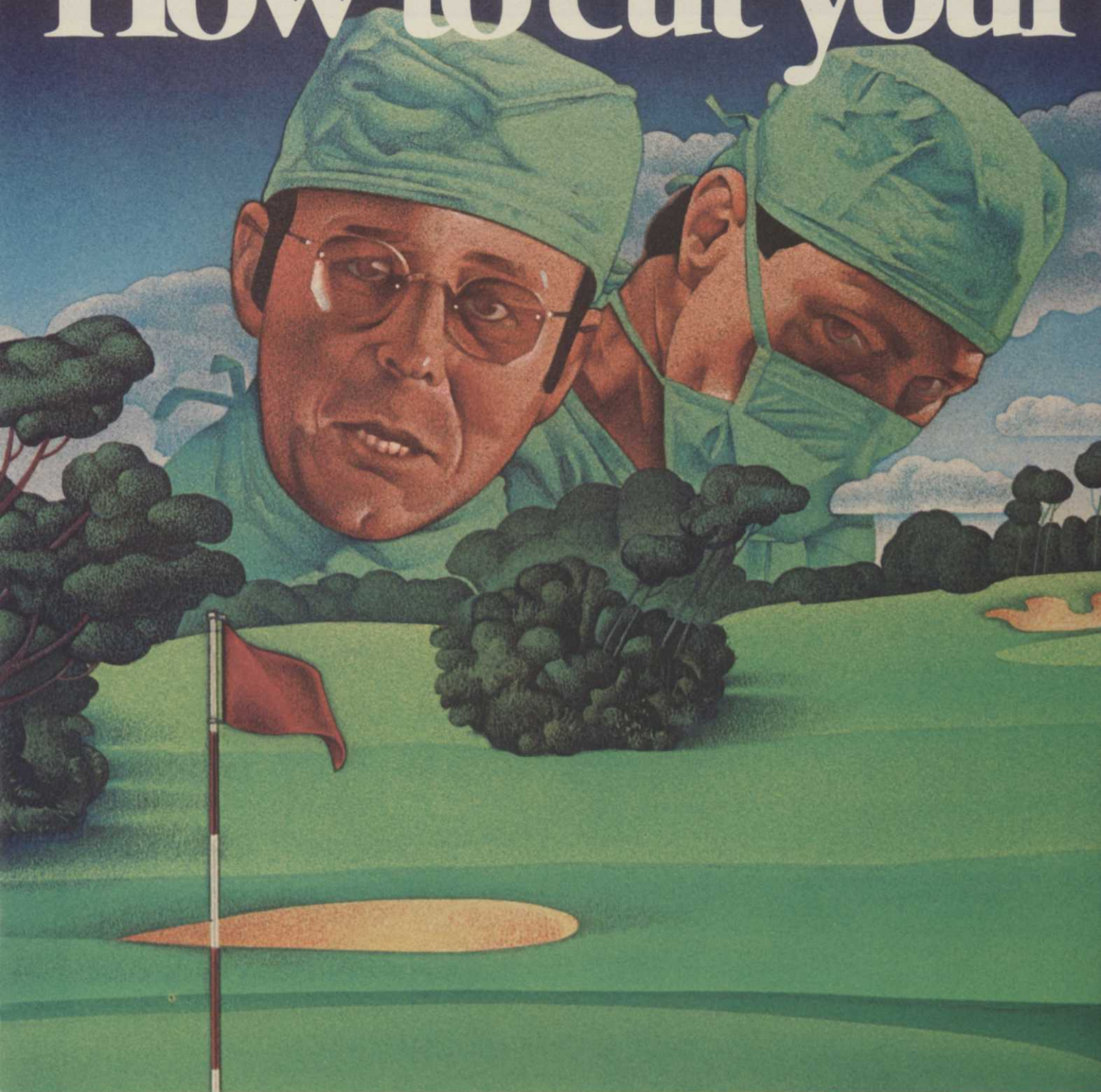
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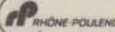


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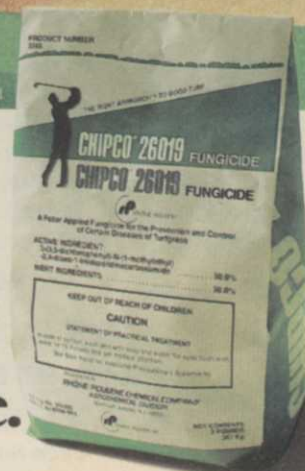
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## LETTERS

**Change of seasons**

Mr. Chapman must be using some arcane calendar because he claims midsummer is anywhere from late May to early July. My calendar, and those of most other of your readers, shows June 21st and 22 as the end of spring and the beginning of summer. Thus your article should have been titled late spring and early summer, for midsummer does not even begin until after all these trees have finished blooming.

I would have included the Japanese Tree Lilac which is a shrub that can be pruned into a single or multiple trunked tree form as a better recommendation. It is reliably hardy in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, and to my mind is much more showy than those listed.

Tree Hydrangias come closest to midsummer August blooming and Hercules' Club (*Aralia Spinosa*) too but neither gets to be truly far up over head so as to be tree-formed.

It seems an oddity that right when the weather is usually the very finest for

being out, few if any of trees or shrubs are in full bloom. Even the perennials seem to take a break about then with only a few phlox and plantain lilies and hardy amaryllis blooming. But if one is into native prairie plants one can have a wealth of bloom in mid- to late summer with cone flowers, sun flowers, black-eyed susans, asters and more.

But really now, lets not again mislead the readers by calling spring midsummer.

Alyn Hess  
Landscape Architect

**Useful magazine**

Please convey my appreciation to Douglas Chapman for his excellent series on trees. It expands our vision once again beyond the "old reliables" we repeatedly use.

In future issues, we would be interested in articles which dealt with topsoil: what is the accepted norm, typical specifications, modifications to improve, interpreting test lab reports, etc. Even among the "experts," we have

found a great range of opinions on all these items.

I know you continually do articles on grasses, but some get rather technical and don't always deal with the practicalities of specifying and using. We would like to see articles in the Doug Chapman vein, which dealt with bluegrasses, fescues, ryes, clovers, etc; what are the best types, new introductions which are proving successful and are available.

Dean A. Johnson, ASLA  
Johnson and Dee

**More foreman needed**

I read with great interest your article in the August, 1981 issue of *Weeds Trees & Turf* on co-op landscape students. Being relatively familiar with the program at Mississippi and most of the employers interviewed, I found the comments most interesting. One in particular struck a nerve, that of Wally SaBell's, regarding the need for more two-year programs rather than four-year programs. We employ graduates in supervisory and management levels, but find a great void at the working foreman and crew leader level. It would be appreciated if you would consider doing an article on two-year Vo-Tech landscape schools or should you have a list of associates degree colleges with landscape criterias, I would appreciate your sending me a copy or steering me to a source of this information.

Thank you very much for your assistance and I'll appreciate any help you'll give me along these lines.

Marshall Muginer, President  
Lafayette Nursery Sales  
Lafayette, LA


**Gypsy Moth Eggs**

I enjoy reading *Weeds, Trees and Turf* as it helps me keep up-to-date on new endeavors, materials and ideas in the tree industry. However, when I see articles about subjects that I am familiar with and find misleading information, I have to question other articles. I am referring to your "Gypsy Moth" article. Gypsy moths don't lay eggs in April and May (Pages 28 and 34). Also, the paragraph on page 104 implies that the male deposits the eggs. I believe you were referring to a successful mating and the resultant eggs from that mating.

Robert Partyka  
Director of Horticulture, Chemscape

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