

Potomac Valley Chapter ARS

George McLellan's Recommendations for Fall and Winter Gardens

Supplement to the March 2014 Newsletter *By Don Hyatt*

Unfortunately, your March newsletter will not come out until after we return from our trip to the North Carolina Nurseries. Since George McLellan will be talking about his recommendations for the winter garden at our joint meeting with the Northern Virginia Chapter ASA on March 16, we thought you might like to have a few of his suggestions before we go. George will have much more to say when he gives his talk, but this supplement will list some plants you might look for that can add winter interest to your rhododendron garden.

Hollies and other Broadleaf Evergreens

George is active in the Holly Society, and surely has many favorites. Our native *Ilex opaca* has wonderful forms, and I like 'Satyr Hill' which has rounded leaves and large red berries. The National Arboretum introduced a variant of Foster's Holly called 'Sunny Foster'. It is very striking since older leaves and shaded foliage remain dark green, but leaves exposed to strong sun will turn bright yellow. Some other hollies he recommends are 'Nellie Stevens', 'Dragon Lady', 'Canary', and *I. crenata* 'Little Gem'.



Ilex 'Sunny Foster' (foliage)



(plant)

Some of the other broadleaf evergreens he recommends include selections of the Southern Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem' and 'Kay Parris'. There are many forms of *Aucuba japonica* with spectacular leaves, so look for 'Crotonifolia' and 'Gold Dust', and any others that attract your attention.



Ilex verticillata in the Landscape

Deciduous Hollies

There are some wonderful deciduous hollies that can be very spectacular in fall and winter. The image to the left was taken at the Welcome Center in North Carolina when George, J. Jackson, Lindy Johnson, and I stopped there on our way to Asheville this fall. The selections 'Red Sprite' and 'Winter Red' are female plants and will produce masses of red berries, and there are yellow berried deciduous hollies, too. With most hollies, you need a "pollinator", a nearby male plant that blooms at the same time as the females. Male plants do not have berries, but they are essential since the female plants need their pollen in order to set fruit.

Conifers

There are many conifers that will provide wonderful winter color, not just deep greens but yellows, bronzes, and blue-green shades, too. Selections of Hinoki cypress, *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Crippsii' and 'Aurora' have yellow needles. The Blue Atlas Cedar, *Cedrus atlantica glauca*, has tufts of frosty blue needles.

Winter Bark

During this winter, I have been impressed with a Japanese maple I purchased a few years ago, *Acer japonicum* 'Bihou'. The branches are yellow with just a slight red blush and they contrast well against the deep green of rhododendrons. Other maple recommendations include 'Japanese Sunrise' which has more red, and 'Sango Kaku' which has deep red stems. As these plants age, the older bark will lose its spectacular coloration, so people often plan to replace them in time. Many crape myrtles like 'Natchez' have striking bark but it usually improves with age.



Japanese Maple 'Bihou'

Fall and Spring Blooming Camellias

Camellia Forest Nursery will usually have a wonderful selection of fall and spring camellia varieties. They can also suggest plants that are likely hardy in our area. The late Dr. Ackerman at the National Arboretum developed a number of hardy fall blooming *Camellia sasanqua* hybrids including 'Snowflurry' which has semi-double white flowers and yellow stamens. His 'Winter's Waterlily' has fully double white flowers with narrow petals and looks like a water lily. An excellent red fall bloomer is 'Yuletide'. 'Hana Jiman' and 'Autumn Sunrise' are delicate blends of pink and white.

The spring blooming Camellias are primarily *C. japonica* hybrids, and some of those are hardier than others. We will certainly know after this winter. Some that George recommends include the red and white blossoms of 'Governor Mouton' and 'Crimson Candles'



Camellia sasanqua 'Yuletide'



Prunus mume 'Kobai'

A plant that should be in every winter garden is witch hazel, *Hamamelis x intermedia*. There are many selections such as 'Angelly' with its spidery lemon yellow flowers, 'Arnold Promise' which is deeper yellow, 'Jelena' which has orange blossoms, or 'Diane' with red blooms.



Edgeworthia chrysantha

Late Winter Blooming Trees and Shrubs:

Another specialty of Camellia Forest is the Japanese Apricot, *Prunus mume*. This tree was one of J. C. Raulston's favorite plants, and tends to bloom sporadically from late winter to early spring. Flowers will get frozen from time to time, but choose dark pink forms or reds since the dead flowers are not as noticeable.

There are other winter blooming trees and shrubs George recommends including *Mahonia x media* selections 'Charity' and 'Winter Sun', Winter Jasmine (*J. nudiflorum*), Winter Sweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*), Winterhazel (*Corylopsis glabrescens*), and *Stachyurus praecox*.

The oriental paperbush, *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, has year round appeal. Be sure to plant it somewhere so you can admire its pendant, silvery white buds all winter long. In early spring, those buds will open to fragrant yellow blossoms, and its lush, blue-green foliage is attractive all season long. Deer have never bothered any part of my plant!



Hamamelis 'Angelly'

Late Winter Blooming Perennials

Naturally, Hellebores are in peak bloom at this time of year. Pine Knot Farms has its Hellebore Festival, and you can count on Tony Avent to have wonderful selections at Plant Delight's, too. Big Bloomers has excellent hellebores at good prices, and all kinds of other plants, too. *Helleboris niger* 'Joseph Lemper' blooms very early with large white blossoms. Tissue culture hybrids like 'Ivory Prince' and 'Pink Frost' are very uniform, but try to pick out seed grown double hybrids in bloom.

Hardy *Cyclamen hederifolium* and *C. coum* make great companions, too. They are small, and look great along a rhododendron border.

We hope you will join us on our nursery trips, and will consider adding some winter color to your garden!



Double Red Hellebore Hybrid