



Light up Fall with the Color of Changing Leaves

Autumn is alive with the color of changing leaves. Maples and oaks may be at the top of the list but there are also many shrubs with outstanding fall color whose size allows them to fit into most suburban gardens. Many also contribute spring or summer flowers and late summer fruit, too.

Now is the perfect time to notice these shrubs in neighborhood landscapes and consider which ones you'd like to add to your own landscape this fall or next spring.

A U.S. native that offers multi-season interest is Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*). Its dark green leaves turn reddish purple or scarlet in fall. Fragrant, white flowers bloom in June or July. This 3 to 5-foot shrub has a loose, pendulous habit. Although it is native to wet areas, it is adaptable to most soils and grows well in sun or partial shade.



The foliage of dwarf fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenii*) changes from bluish-green to yellow, orange and scarlet as temperatures cool. Fragrant, bottlebrush-like flowers appear in spring. Dwarf fothergilla is a good choice for foundation plantings or as a specimen in a perennial border. It will grow in partial shade, but its best fall color will result in full sun. It grows best in slightly moist, acidic soils.

Similar in its soil and light requirements, but larger in size, is summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*). This oval-shaped, upright shrub ranges in height from 3 to 8 feet depending on how happy it is where it's planted. Bright green foliage turns brilliant yellow in fall. Panicles of fragrant, white flowers bloom in July or August. Varieties with pink flowers are also available.

Red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*) is another shrub that is gaining in popularity as a hedge. This upright shrub not only has beautiful brilliant red leaves in fall, it also boasts beautiful fruit. Brilliantissima is an especially beautiful variety.

Lilacs are not often included when talking about fall color, but Miss Kim is an exception to her family's rule. Generally growing about 5 feet tall and wide, she sports her expected fragrant, purple flowers in May. But unexpectedly in fall, her leaves develop a purplish hue that deepens as temperatures cool. Grow lilacs in full sun for the best flowering.



Vernal witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) is one of the first shrubs to bloom in early spring, grows up to 10 feet tall, and glows golden in fall. Witch hazels do best when planted in partial shade.

One of the best viburnums featuring fall color is Koreanspice viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii*). Most people buy this shrub in spring when they breathe in the sweet perfume of its flowers. Come fall, they are delighted with the wine-red color of its foliage. This is a good choice for small gardens as it only reaches 5 feet in height and width.

If you planted blueberries this spring, you will be pleased when the glossy, green leaves turn a gorgeous red - delicious fruit in summer and beautiful fall color! Blueberries prefer moist, acidic soil. Plant them in full sun for the most fruit and the best fall color.

As the flowers in your landscape start to wind down, you can still enjoy rich color by planting shrubs with the tints and tones of fall.



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