

Gardeners can't get enough new plants. One of the best parts of spring, besides longer days and warmer temperatures, is the new varieties on the benches of our local garden centers. Here is a sneak peek at some of the new shrubs ready to call your landscape home in 2017.

**Aronia 'Low Scape Mound'** is a very small chokeberry suitable for use as a groundcover, foundation shrub, or at the edge of a mixed border. It is as durable as it is beautiful and offers three seasons of interest in the landscape. Mounds of glossy green foliage are covered in spring with petite white flowers; in late summer dark purple-black berries are relished by songbirds; and the foliage puts on a fall jacket of brilliant red.

A cultivar of an American native, Aronia 'Low Scape Mound' grows up to 24 inches tall and wide and thrives in moist or dry soil. Plant it in full sun or part shade. Because it is cold hardy to Zone 3, I am going to try it in a large container garden and let it overwinter right in the pot.

A bit larger, **Betula 'Golden Treasure'** is a close relative to the birch tree, but is a slow-growing dwarf growing 2 to 4 feet tall and wide. Grow it in well-drained soil in a sunny spot that receives shade during the hottest part of the day.

Plant Betula 'Golden Treasure' in the mid-ground of a perennial border, as a low hedge, or at the edge of a deck or patio where its lovely yellow leaves can be appreciated. New growth blushes in shades of red and orange. In fall, the foliage smolders deep red.

**Diervilla 'Kodiak Red'** is a cultivar of the native shrub. It grows 3 to 4 feet tall and wide in a broad range of growing conditions – sun or shade and in average to dry soil. Equally at home in a formal foundation planting and a natural mixed border, Diervilla 'Kodiak Red' boasts nectar-filled light yellow flowers all summer.

Leaves unfurl in tones of rich burgundy, fade to green in summer and then blaze vivid red in fall. Best foliage color is achieved in full sun. The shrub rarely requires pruning, but you may want to cut a few of its tall, straight stems for bouquets.

If you are looking for something a little taller, check out the newest ninebark, **Physocarpus 'Ginger Wine'**. It grows 5 to 6 feet tall and wide. A garden chameleon, its foliage emerges sunny orange and then matures to deep burgundy red in summer. In late spring to early summer, large white flower clusters steal the show before aging to attractive red seed heads. After the foliage drops in late fall, its peeling bark is revealed for winter interest.

Use Ginger Wine ninebark as a distinctive hedge, a backdrop for yellow flowering perennials or as a focal point in the sunny landscape.

**Sambucus nigra 'Black Tower'** is ideal for space-challenged gardeners who want a tall shrub. Growing 6 to 8 feet tall but only 3 to 4 feet wide, its large serrated leaves emerge the color of celery but quickly darken to very dark burgundy. Fragrant, bright pink flowers bloom May to June and are followed by dark red berries.

Sambucus nigra 'Black Tower' grows best in full sun but will tolerate part shade. It is quite adaptable to a wide range of soils but if given its choice, would choose moist soil rich with organic matter. Imagine this shrub backing a planting of pink, yellow and white perennials – fantastic!

If you have the space, **Sambucus nigra 'Instant Karma'** is a must have for gardeners who love variegated foliage. This elderberry grows into a 6 to 8 foot tall and wide mass of blue-green leaves unfolding with gold margins in spring, slowly changing to creamy white in summer. Large, lacy clusters of white flowers bloom in late spring or early summer.

Add a beam of brightness wherever you plant it – in a mixed border, to screen an undesirable view, or as a specimen plant in a sunny location in the garden. It prefers moist soil, but will adapt to drier locations, too. Who doesn't want to add some instant karma to their landscapes?

And then there are the new hydrangeas. They will get an article all to themselves.

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