



## VARIEGATED PLANTS FOR GARDEN APPEAL

Gardeners are always looking for ways to spice up their gardens. We buy flowering plants with brightly-colored blooms; trendy tropicals with exotic flowers; or plant new containers to brighten up insipid spots in the border. And while these are all reasonable ways to add appeal, there is an easier longer-lasting way - choose plants with variegated foliage.

Variegation is the appearance of differently-colored marks, patches, or streaks in leaves and is caused by pigments in plant cells. Leaves can be variegated in a myriad of colors, and variegation can be sharply defined or softly blended.

Leaf edges, centers or veins on plants as small as groundcovers or as large as trees and shrubs offer valued variegated foliage for the landscape. No hostas appear below - they deserve an article all to themselves.

### Groundcovers

Burgundy Glow Carpet Bugle (Ajuga reptans) is a dense, short, mat-like groundcover that presents pink, white and green leaves. Plant it beneath a purple-foliaged shrub for a pleasing

color combination.



Burgundy Glow Ajuga has beautiful variegated foliage.

Chameleon Plant (Houttuynia cordata) has beautiful, heart-shaped leaves of red, cream and deep green. It may only grow 8 to 10" tall, but this is a fast-growing groundcover that can become invasive. Plant it in containers or in areas where it has plenty of room to spread.

Liven up shade gardens with Spotted Deadnettle (Lamium maculatum). Beacon Silver, White Nancy, and Pink Pewter each have silvery-white leaves with green margins and bloom in deep pink, bright pink, or white. Anne Greenaway has blended dark green, pale green, chartreuse and silver foliage.



### Perennials

Best planted in a sunny rock garden or between stepping stones the cream and white grass-like, evergreen foliage of Nifty Thrifty Common Thrift (Armeria maritima) dazzles in the sunshine. Its pink flowers in May and June are a bonus.

Choose either Jack Frost or Looking Glass Heartleaf Brunnera (Brunnera macrophylla) to brighten up a shady border. Clouds of blue forget-me-not flowers bloom for six weeks or longer in spring over 12 to 15" tall mounds of large, heart-shaped, richly-textured, frosty silver foliage. Plant either beside Japanese painted ferns for a match made in heaven.

For the middle of a sunny border, choose Bluebeard (Caryopteris). Summer Sorbet has periwinkle blue flower clusters in August over bright yellow-margined green foliage. Snow Fairy has lavender blue flowers from August to September atop white-margined green foliage. Partner either with a large, dark green-foliaged neighbor to make their leaves sparkle. Or choose companions that flower in the color of their variegation. The yellow blooms of Atlanta Moonlight daylily echo

the color of the margins of Midnight Rose has burnished asters and mums for the Summer Sorbet; the white black leaves spattered with rose season 's floral finale. flowers of Becky Shasta daisy will in spring turning to pink and illuminate the white-margined cream as the season progresses. foliage of Snow Fairy.

Many covet the showy sulfur yellow bracts of spurge ( Euphorbia ) in the spring, but we can also enjoy the beautiful foliage of Bonfire and First Blush long after the bracts have faded. Bonfire is aptly named with foliage flaming in shades of purple, red, orange and chartreuse. Or choose the softer light green foliage of First Blush that has creamy margins flushed with bright pink.

Another sun-loving, summer-blooming perennial, Lorraine Sunshine False Sunflower ( Helioopsis helianthoides ) has white-veined green foliage. Planted in front of a dark green backdrop, it will stop visitors to your garden in their tracks.

The creamy variegated foliage of Stairway to Heaven Jacob 's Ladder ( Polemonium reptans ) blushes pink in cool weather. Its upright habit makes it an ideal neighbor for a mounding dark green or blue hosta. The Lungworts ( Pulmonaria ) give us an abundance of varieties with fuzzy foliage splashed with silvery white in different degrees. Combine any of them with Snowdrop Anemone ( Anemone sylvestris ) for a sparkling spring-blooming duet in a partly shady spot.



Coral bells ( Heuchera ) are becoming a mainstay in partly shaded gardens. Snow Angel is a small variety with creamy white and light green foliage. Silver Scrolls is a little larger – up to 9” tall – and has leaves overlaid with metallic silver and veins of dark bronze. A newer and larger variety at 18” tall,

Sedums are a reliable choice for the low-maintenance sunny border. Autumn Charm has leaves edged in creamy yellow. Flowers begin white, turn pink, and then to red in September. Pink Chablis has blue-green leaves with bright white margins. White buds become pink flowers in August. Plant these with

**Shrubs**

The Dogwoods ( Cornus ) give us some variegated versions. Elegantissima grows 6 to 8’ tall with gray green leaves with irregular white margins. Ivory Halo stays a more compact 5 to 6’ tall. Both are excellent candidates for a shrub border. Early spring-blooming bulbs planted at their feet will highlight their red stems.

Emerald and Gold Euonymus is a low-growing, tight-branching, evergreen shrub with glossy dark green foliage with yellow margins. In cold weather, its leaves will flush pinkish red. Blondy is another selection of similar habit, but its dark green leaves are generously splashed with yellow. Tolerant of most growing conditions, either looks best when combined with other woody plants.

Nothing says spring like the yellow blooms of Forsythia. The foliage of Kumsum sports an intricate network of golden veins that extends the ornamental value of this plant until the leaves drop in fall. It grows 4 to 6’ tall and prefers partly sunny conditions.

Branches of green, white, and from a distance. Delicately- accents; when used in mass, pink foliage explode from Nishiki variegated plants are best they may be visually Willow (Salix integra ' Hakuro planted where they can be overwhelming. Nishiki ' ). New growth is most admired close up – next to a colorful so seasonally prune this path, near a deck or patio, or in a Variegated plants are very shrub or small grafted tree. Its container. valuable to gardeners. They colorful stems also offer winter brighten shady areas, unite the interest.

### **Design Considerations**

Variegated plants, especially color combinations of neighboring those with bold variegation, draw plants, and provide built-in color the eye directly to them. As a and interest throughout the When placing variegated plants result, two or more planted in season. Choose a few in the landscape consider the close proximity create variegated plants and add long-distance from which they are uncomfortable tension – the eye lasting appeal to your landscape. most often seen. Plants with bold doesn 't know which to focus on. variegation can easily be seen Use variegated plants as