

New Plant Introductions: Shrubs  
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By the time flower show season rolls around the winter holidays are but a vague and bittersweet memory. As the heart of winter descends on the Pacific Northwest gardeners relish the quietude of the spare winter landscape. Settling into a period of restless inactivity, we turn to mail order catalogs and books to assuage our appetite for plants. Visions of renovated beds and borders emerge as we thumb through the newest design tomes. Succumbing to the lure of purple prose and improbably vivid photographs with colors that surely aren't real we compile lists of must have plants. For garden geeks nothing compares to the hunt for new plants and from what I have seen nurseries have plenty of new arrivals from which to choose.

Recently hybridizers have introduced a spate of new spring and summer flowering deciduous shrubs and small trees with attractive, vividly colored foliage. I first saw *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Little Honey', aptly named for its golden tinted foliage, in a local wholesale nursery last year. Oak-leaf hydrangeas require far less water than many of their clan and I was anxious to experiment with this honey hued beauty in the garden. I purchased two, planting one in full sun and the other in partial shade, protected from the late afternoon sun. Both thrived, receiving supplemental summer water every 21 days, holding their electric color throughout the season, although the one exposed to full sun had some crispy foliage by the end of August. *Hydrangea* 'Little Honey' is expected to reach a height and width of four feet displaying large trusses of white flowers in early summer. Like its green-leafed brethren its foliage assumes incendiary shades of red and yellow in late autumn.

The burgundy-merlot colored foliage of a newly patented mimosa, *Albizia julibrissin* 'Summer Chocolate' is a showstopper. Even the most hardened horticultural heart skips a beat when introduced to this Japanese discovery finally making its way to our shores. Available at specialty retail nurseries this spring, *Albizia* 'Summer Chocolate' has finely fretted, fernlike foliage. Fluffy

cotton-candy pink flowers appear in midsummer complimenting the dusky bordeaux infused foliage which doesn't fade or flag in hot, dry summers. A graceful, arching habit and its size, 20 feet tall and 15 feet wide, make it a good choice for inclusion even in small gardens. The word isn't out yet about whether or not this seductress seeds as prolifically as its relatives.

A staple of the late summer garden *Caryopteris* 'Worcester Gold' has been superseded by *Caryopteris incana* 'Sunshine Blue'. This new arrival has larger, sunny-yellow foliage and is a stronger, more vigorous plant than its predecessor. Amethyst- blue flowers on six inch spikes are a dramatic contrast to the luminous leaves that retain their rich lustrous patina throughout the season. *Caryopteris* 'Sunshine Blue' is a low maintenance plant impervious to high temperatures, drought and cold if planted in well drained soil. This newcomer was bred in England and forms a well-branched, rounded shrub three feet high and wide.

From the Netherlands comes *Weigela florida* 'Midnight Wine' a dwarf sibling of *Weigela* 'Wine and Roses' with burgundy-plum foliage overlaid with a metallic glint. Topping out at a whopping 18 inches in height and 24 inches in width, it is perfect plant for the front of the border where it can be used in masses as a ground cover, or in place of a mounding perennial. In late spring and early summer rosy-pink flowers contrast with the dark foliage. Try pairing this with the twinning yellow foliage and magenta flowers of *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard'. The foliage color is most intense when *Weigela* 'Midnight Wine' is planted in full sun.

Another newcomer with a sunny disposition is *Leycesteria Formosa* 'Golden Lanterns'. Having grown the straight species in my garden for many years I was intrigued by the yellow-green foliage on this arching shrub that reaches eight feet in height with a girth of five feet. From mid-summer through fall it is covered with four inch long clusters of purplish bracts and white flowers that are followed by dark purple berries. *Leycesteria* 'Golden Lanterns' performs best in full sun or partial shade.

I don't know about you, but it looks like it will be out with the old and in with the new in my garden this year.