

Spectacular Shrubs

Shrubs never go out of style. They have long been the mainstay of the landscape because of their diversity of form, color, size, texture and utilization in the landscape. In the next five to ten years, shrubs are expected to become even more popular. Mixed borders are expected to be the next big trend in commercial and non-commercial landscapes, replacing the current herbaceous perennial border trend. A mixed border is a place where shrubs grow alongside bulbs, herbaceous perennials, annuals, and/or trees.

Beyond the mixed border, shrubs can be massed. Forsythias, privets, spireas and viburnums are especially suitable for massing or grouping. Shrubs can also be used singly. Single specimens usually echo the shape of plants in other areas of the garden. Specimens are placed in prominent locations, so as to show off some particular ornamental quality: hibiscus and buddleia for flowers, hollies for fruits, and cutleaf Japanese maple for foliage.

Shrubs can be used for foundation plantings. Foundation plants are grown near the house for the purposes of decoration, hiding exposed concrete, or covering architectural flaws. Foundation plants should be durable, handsome throughout the year—evergreens are often chosen—and of slow growth or low stature. Another way to use shrubs in the landscape is for ground cover. Ground covers are usually low, spreading plants arranged in a mass. The best shrub, ground cover featured in this article is *Cotoneaster dammeri* 'Eichholz.'

Shrubs can also be used for topiary. Topiary is the art of making plant sculpture. Topiary is created by shearing plants that are best for use in hedges—especially boxwood, holly and yew. Shrubs are also used for espaliers. The word espalier refers to a plant that has been trained to grow flat against a wall or framework. Espaliers may be of any pattern, formal or informal, and can be made from almost any shrub with flexible growth. Pyracanthas, dogwoods, Japanese hollies and other fruiting shrubs or trees are often used. One of the great advantages of any espalier is that it takes almost no ground space whatsoever, and thus is excellent for a small garden.

One of the most popular landscape uses of shrubs is as a fence or screen, planted as a hedge or shrub border. When a row of shrubs is pruned into a more or less formal shape, it is called a hedge; when it is allowed to grow naturally, it is called a shrub border. Hedge plants should be hardy and able to tolerate competition and poor, dry soil. They should have dense, twiggy natural growth and small leaves. Boxwood, euonymus, hollies and privets are popular hedge shrubs. Large-flowered shrubs like azaleas, hibiscus, wiegels and philadelphus, however, serve well in borders, where their showy blooms are not sheared.

In the next few pages, you will find shrubs that have striking features. Some are new to the retail nursery trades for 1997 and some are old favorites. All have some outstanding ornamental feature such as color, texture, size, shape, etc. that make them excellent choices for a variety of landscape uses.



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Scientific name: *Acer ginnala*

Common name: Amur Maple

Amur maple is a large, multistemmed shrub that can be pruned to a single stem to use as a specimen tree. As a multistemmed shrub it will grow 18 feet wide and high. It has many spectacular ornamental traits including, attractive foliage in the fall when the dark green leaves turn a bright orange to red. The wings of the fruit are also showy usually turning from green to bright red in summer. The flowers are light yellow, fragrant and hang in long panicles in early May. Best of all, this shrub is hardy in all zones and tolerates a wide variety of sites. It prefers, however, a slightly acid, sandy loam soil. There are two good cultivars available, 'Compacta' and 'Durand Dwarf.' These selections are smaller, denser forms with superior fall color. Amur maple is best used as a specimen or in a shrub border.

Scientific name: *Cotinus coggygia* 'Royal Purple'
Common name: Royal Purple Smoke

Cotinus coggygia, is a deciduous shrub known commonly as the common smoke tree or smokebush. They are easy to grow in any ordinary garden soil that is not too rich or moist. 'Royal Purple' is a multi-trunked form that grows 15 feet high and 10-12 feet wide. It displays intense purple-red leaves. The color will last through the season. It has insignificant tiny yellow flowers in early summer which are followed by tiny pinkish-purple seeds in summer. The seeds are borne in long lasting airy clusters. The common name, smoke tree, comes from the soft look of the mass of fruiting panicles in summer. 'Royal Purple' is best grown on its own as a large and showy specimen, however, it can be used in mixed borders, or shrub borders. 'Royal Purple' is hardy to Zone 5.

Scientific name: *Cotoneaster dammeri* 'Eichholz'
Common name: Eichholz Cotoneaster

Cotoneaster is one of the most important and useful berrying shrubs in the garden. Cotoneasters have thornless branches making them easy to distinguish from their rival shrub *Pyracantha*. Eichholz cotoneaster is an evergreen, prostrate shrub that grows 10-12 inches high, and eight to ten feet wide. Its trailing branches often root at the joints, making it a valuable plant for the rock garden. It has white, solitary blooms in spring with spreading petals. The

fruit in fall is a very showy carmine-red. Its large bright green leaves turn gold to orange-red in autumn for an impressive show. It grows best in moist, well-drained soil in sunny locations, but they can tolerate almost any site. Besides using Eichholz cotoneaster in rock gardens, it can be used as a groundcover, especially as a hillside planting and is hardy to Zone 5.

Scientific name: *Cotoneaster horizontalis*
Common name: Rockspray Cotoneaster or Fishbone Cotoneaster

Fishbone cotoneaster is the favorite of the deciduous cotoneasters. It is frequently seen in gardens, hugging the bricks of the house or spreading as a low bush, two to three feet high and five to eight feet wide, between taller shrubs. The branches have a distinct herringbone pattern and the berries and autumn leaves are bright red. In spring, pink buds open into small white flowers. There is also a variegated form 'Variegatus.' All forms are hardy to Zone 4 and can be used as a foundation planting or ground cover.

Scientific name: *Euonymus alata* 'Compacta'
Common name: Dwarf Winged Burning Bush

Dwarf winged burning bush is a deciduous, spreading shrub that forms a flat topped mound of dense slender stems six to eight feet high and slightly wider. The flowers are yellow and quite small, borne in May-June. 'Compacta' is grown for its brilliant red autumn coloring. It is sensational as a hedge or used as a specimen. It grows well in any soil or exposure, but fall color is best in full sun. The branches have corky ridges. The Dwarf winged burning bush is hardy to Zone 4.

Scientific name: *Euonymus fortunei* 'Ivory Jade'
Common name: Ivory Jade Euonymus

E. fortunei is the hardiest of the evergreen species of *Euonymus*. Some of the most common cultivars grown are 'Emerald 'n Gold', 'Emerald Gaiety', 'Colorata' and 'Golden Prince.' *E. fortunei* is an evergreen shrub that flowers greenish white, in May-June. 'Ivory Jade' has rich green leaves with pronounced ivory-white margins, tinged pink in cold weather. It is densely branched and forms a mound two to three feet high and six feet wide. 'Ivory Jade' can be used as an attractive evergreen ground cover, foundation planting or border. Color is best in full sun, but will grow in a variety of exposures and soils and is hardy to Zone 5.

Scientific name: *Hibiscus syriacus* 'Red Bird' and 'Diana'

Common name: Shrubby Mallow or Rose-of-Sharon or Shrub Althea

Shrub form *Hibiscus* are deciduous shrubs that have been favorites of gardeners for many years because of their showy flowers. Rose-of-Sharon will grow in any well drained, reasonable soil. Full sun is best, but it will tolerate partial shade. 'Red Bird' is a single-flowered selection, with upright dense slender branches, becoming more open branched with age. It has many, magnificent, red colored blooms in summer. 'Diana' is one of the US National Arboretum selections that has a long blooming season, large, sterile, single, pure white flowers, thick textured petals and foliage and dense branching. 'Red Bird' and 'Diana' make excellent hedges or screens, or can be planted in groups in shrub borders or mixed borders. They grow ten feet high and six feet wide and are hardy to Zone 6.

Scientific name: *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora'

Common name: Pee Gee Hydrangea

Hardy to zone three, this large shrub, 15 feet tall and nine feet wide, is grown primarily for its large flowers. It is summer flowering, August to September and the sterile flower panicles can reach a length of 40 cm and 30 cm in width. Pee Gee makes quite a show when it is in flower, and thus, is suitable as a specimen planting. It is also used towards the back of a shrub border or mixed border for a summer accent of white. As the flowers mature, they turn from white to whitish-purple. There are few late summer-flowering woody plants and thus 'Grandiflora' is a welcome addition in any landscape.

Scientific name: *Pieris japonica* 'Forest Flame' and 'Valley Valentine'

Common name: Japanese Pieris

Japanese pieris are broad-leaved evergreen shrubs, widely planted for their clusters of flowers in early spring and their dark green foliage, which is reddish when it first appears. Pieris thrives in peaty, somewhat sandy, moderately acid soil mulched with leaves and are hardy to Zone 5. They are slow-growing plants, useful for gateway plantings, as specimens or accents, and for rock gardens. 'Forest Flame' has a mounding habit of dense branches. It

grows six to seven feet high and wide. The new growth is especially vivid, coming out flame red and changing to pink, cream then green with maturity. In the spring, flower clusters are profuse and broader than the species. 'Valley Valentine' has a similar habit to other *P. japonica* and reaches five to seven feet high and wide. Winter buds and flowers are quite sensational as they are a deep red. Colorful new growth matures to a dark green.

Scientific name: *Potentilla fruticosa*

Common name: Shrubby Cinquefoil

On the prairies, perhaps one of the best shrubs for a foundation planting or low hedge is shrubby cinquefoil. They grow two feet high and three feet wide and are hardy to Zone 3. Some may not call it spectacular because its foliage and leaves are not impressive. But, this is a spectacular shrub for its habit of continuous bloom, low maintenance and ability to grow in a wide variety of sites and soils. There is a large selection of cultivars: some have white flowers like 'Abbotswood' and 'Mt. Everest;' many are yellow such as 'Gold Finger,' 'Gold Drop,' 'Coronation Triumph' and 'Katherine Dykes;' some are orange such as 'Tangerine,' and there is a red cultivar 'Red Ace.' The newest sensation is the pink flowering forms, 'Pink Princess,' 'Pink Beauty' and 'Floppy Disc,' a double pink.

Scientific name: *Prunus triloba* 'Multiplex'

Common name: Double Flowering Plum

There are many hardy *Prunus* shrubs to consider that make a nice addition to the landscape in the prairies and interior BC. Flowering plum can be found as a single flowering form 'Simplex' or as a full double form 'Multiplex.' 'Multiplex' is a large shrub growing 12 feet high and nine feet wide. The flowers of 'Multiplex' are very attractive as fully doubled pinks. This shrub is grown for its spring blooms and should be positioned towards the back of a shrub border for an early spring accent. This plant is hardy and suitable for many locations in the prairies. However, it is wise to protect it by planting along the side of a house, as the flower buds can be killed in a severe winter. It flowers in early May on the plains and bears red fruit in summer. 'Multiplex' is hardy to Zone 4. Another noteworthy hardy *Prunus* is *Prunus X cistena*, an upright deciduous shrub grown for its reddish purple foliage. *P. X cistena* is hardy to Zone 3.

Scientific name: *Pyracantha coccinea* 'Kasan' and 'Lalandei Monrovia'
Common name: Firethorn

Pyracantha is a year-round visual delight: foliage is attractive; small, white flowers appear in clusters; and highly ornamental fruit clusters in autumn remain on plants well into spring. *Pyracanthas* are best planted where their berries can be appreciated, yet out of the way enough that thorns will not snag passing traffic. One of the best uses of *Pyracantha* is an espalier plant, trained against a bare wall or fence. *Pyracanthas* can also be used as specimen plants or dense screens or hedges. Plant in full sun to partial shade in rich, well drained soils. Birds are often attracted to the berries. Two particular cultivars of interest are 'Kasan' *pyracantha* (Zone 5) and 'Lalandei Monrovia' *pyracantha* (Zone 6). 'Kasan' firethorn is an evergreen compact branching shrub that grows eight to ten feet high and wide. It has bright orange-red berries that are produced in fall and are retained until late into winter. Monrovia firethorn is a selected strain for profuse bearing of bright orange berries each fall. It has a superior upright habit, grows eight to ten feet high, and produces lustrous green foliage on dense branches.

Scientific name: *Spiraea X bumalda*
Limemound™ 'Monhub'
Common name: Limemound™ *Spiraea*

Bumalda spireas are low, mound-shaped shrubs resulting from a cross between *S. japonica* and *S. albiflora*. They are handsome, flowering and deciduous. Bumalda spireas bloom on new wood, and heavy pruning in the early spring is advised to remove last year's seed clusters and produce larger flower clusters. Several are commonly available and hardy into the prairies with a Zone 4 designation. The most common are 'Anthony Waterer', 'Froebelii', 'Crispa' and 'Goldflame.' Limemound™ is hardier than the other cultivars, with a Zone 3 designation. It has dense slender branches that mound three feet high and six feet wide. It displays lemon-yellow leaves with a russet tinge when emerging in the spring. The foliage coloration blends into a lime green when mature. Limemound™ has light pink flowers in summer. The autumn coloring of this shrub is another unique feature. The foliage becomes orange-red and the branches also turn red for a sensational fall display. With year round spectacular color this is an ideal choice for a

foundation planting, mixed border or shrub border. The best site for a spirea is a reasonably moist one in full sun.

Scientific name: *Spiraea japonica* 'Magic Carpet'
Common name: 'Magic Carpet' Spira

This is a new English introduction, developed by renowned plant breeder David Tristram. It is smaller and brighter than the popular cultivar *S. X bumalda* 'Goldflame.' It is a very compact shrub, good for groundcover use or massed in a shrub or mixed border. It grows 15-18 inches tall and 18-24 inches in spread. It has vibrant red new growth in the spring with the foliage becoming a rich bronze as it matures. In early summer, it is covered with a profusion of deep pink flowers, creating a very nice contrast to the foliage. The russet tones deepen with the onset of fall and remain colorful for quite some time. 'Magic Carpet' is hardy to Zone 4.

Scientific name: *Syringa vulgaris* 'Burgundy Queen'
Common name: 'Burgundy Queen' French Lilac

'Burgundy Queen' was selected for outstanding characteristics after comparing it to 45 lilac varieties. It produces vibrant, burgundy-red, single flowers in large conical clusters and is similar to *S. vulgaris* 'Monge,' but blooms 10 to 14 days earlier and grows to a height of eight to 10 feet. 'Burgundy Queen' grows best in full sun, tolerates most normal soil conditions and is excellent in a shrub border or mixed border. Combine plantings with *S. vulgaris* 'Monge' for an excellent season of outstanding beauty. 'Burgundy Queen' is hardy to Zone 3.

