

I asked some of our local WSNLA (Washington State Nursery and Landscapers Association) members to name their favorite plants. Notice they couldn't pick just one.

Mary Camp from Bainbridge Gardens chose a Honey Crisp Apple Tree. Honey Crisp trees are disease free and reliable. It needs a mid-season pollinator and Spartan would definitely fill the bill. It too is disease free and reliable. Buy one of each and you'll have great apples that will last until spring in cold storage (that is if you don't gobble them up way before that).

Dorothy and Stephen Serafin of Quality Landscapes from Port Hadlock shared some of their picks. Dorothy loves Bergamot because it's perfect for attracting butterflies and humming birds. "Be careful though because it's in the mint family and can be invasive," she says. Her favorite varieties are the bergamot forms with deep red flowers. Stephen Serafin is partial to plants with variegated foliage. Stephen loves Ponticum, a rhody with narrow leaves lined in creamy white and lavender flowers. (It's one of my favorite rhody's too.) Stephen is also partial to Carex 'Variegata' morrowii and Carex 'Ice Dancer.'

Sam Rader from Valley Nursery says, "I won't be happy unless I have one of everything." But, he admitted if he has to choose he wants plants with year round interest. Korean dogwood is great for year-round color and fruit for the birds. "I've never seen an ugly rhody," Sam said, "PJM has fragrant foliage and comes in either full size or compact form. Rosemary, lavender and bergenia are also on his list of great plants.

Roadhouse Nursery owners George and Jan Bahr described their plant choices. George likes Asclepias incarnata 'Ice Ballet' (Swamp Milkweed). It's an excellent butterfly attractor and can thrive in dry conditions or will live in shallow water so is a great pond plant. 'Ice Ballet' has a vanilla fragrance. Asclepias Soul Mate is crimson (to pink). Jan chooses Water Hawthorn. Plants are green with a long narrow leaf growing from one and a half inches to six inches. Flowers with white petals and black stamens bloom on a v-shaped stalk. It's very fragrant and remains nearly evergreen. Plants originally came from South Africa going dormant in summer and languishing in fall. In our climate Water Hawthorn will bloom all fall and winter. If we have thick layers of ice on our ponds it will die back but starts thriving again when temperatures warm up.

Landscape Designer Megan Pulkkinen enjoys Aster 'The Prince.' Foliage is dark burgundy and flowers are white with pink tints. "It's great as a hedge." Her tree pick is Parottia persica (Persian Ironwood). It's a small tree with amazing autumn color – several colors on each leaf.

Kate Easton of Garden Visions chose Cornus alba 'Argenteo-margenata' as a great deciduous shrub. Leaves are green with a white edge and flowers are white. Coral Bark Maple has great contrast with super-light yellow leaves against the coral bark. One of Kate's favorite grasses is Miscanthus sinensis 'Gracillimus' (Maiden Grass). She says in our climate this grass takes two years to mature and bear flowerheads. Miscanthus Yakushimensis (dwarf maiden grass) blooms profusely Kate says. Her tip for cutting back grasses in areas with wet winters (i.e. here) is "wait until spring. Our ornamental grasses need foliage for protection through our damp winters."

Colleen Miko of Colleen's A Landscape Design Company picks Arthrysus 'Raven's Wing' with tiny white composite flowers and dusky-grey foliage. Arthrysus is a perennial but in our climate foliage remains all winter. Colleen combines it with Carex 'Ice Dancer' and Lady-in-Black Aster. Another favorite is Ilex Crenata 'Sky Pencil' as a foundation and accent plant with one-foot girth and four to six foot height.

Trek on over to your favorite nursery or garden center and ask your favorite staff person to show you their favorite plants.