

Sometimes my editor reluctantly has to cut the length of my column. Here are the rest of the WSNLA members' favorite plant picks from last week.

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 Arthriscus 'Raven's Wing' with tiny white composite flowers and dusky-grey foliage. Arthriscus 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.

When trying to select your own favorites peruse the horticulture section of our local libraries. Alison Beck's and Marianne Binetti's books: "Tree & Shrub Gardening for Washington and Oregon," "Annuals for Washington and Oregon" and "Perennials for Washington and Oregon" (Lone Pine) are great resources for decision making. Photos throughout all three books will help you see how the plants might look in your own landscape. You'll find a "Quick Reference Chart" (but very complete) at the back of the shrub and tree book with information about form, foliage and blooming.

Ray and Jan McNeilan with years of horticulture knowledge and experience as Oregon State University Extension Agents created "The Pacific Northwest Gardener's Book of Lists" (Taylor Publishing). Many of the lists were provided by seasoned Master Gardeners. The McNeilans' book doesn't have a single photo but the information contained within is invaluable. Included are 200 lists to "make gardening easier." Topics include: trees less than 25-feet tall, for small areas; trees impossible to grow anything beneath; grasses that will not take over; roses that work as groundcovers; good shrubs for the best cut flowers; and vines for soggy sites. Published in 1997 my copy of this book is falling apart I've referred to it so many times.

Still one of my all time favorite books is "Plant This!" by Ketzell Levine with illustrations by Rene Eisenbart. I'm not sure if it's the illustrations of the coveted plants or the words enclosed within that soothe and entice me so much. I have many of the recommended plants in my own garden. My secret goal is to have one of every plant described in "Plant This!" Hmmm, maybe we'll have to buy some acreage.

These suggestions should get you out there planting up a storm. Happy gardening and next week we'll talk about all the great garden tours right here in Kitsap County in June, July and August so you can get your tickets early and make your plans.

Contact Peg will questions or comments in care of this newspaper or email gardenmentor@yahoo.com