

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 11-19-03) , ©2005

I have a really delightful announcement to make. Soon on BKAT (Bremerton, Kitsap Access Television) you'll be able to tune in to a program called "Kitsap Gardening." It's a creation of WSU Extension and Experience CD Productions. As soon as I know the showing schedule I'll let you all know in this column. The show will run several times each month featuring seasonal topics of interest for both new and seasoned gardeners. The show features WSU Kitsap Master Gardeners and local green industry specialists and experts.

The first episode is on plants for fall color, ornamental grasses, perennial plantings and decorative garden art for inside the home. The first episode features Hollie (CORRECT SPELLING) Savage and Caroline Cloudas from Savage Plants Nursery in Kingston and Sylvia Smith from Poulsbo Market Garden Center. You'll enjoy their insights and information. I happily am the producer of the show and have a few speaking parts too. I hope you'll all email me with your requests and ideas for future programs. We'll be filming a show on greenhouse gardening for December.

While you're waiting for the current show to air here are a few tempting plants you might want to choose from for colorful plantings in your own gardens. These suggestions feature plants in shades ranging from gold, chartreuse, orange, yellow, amber, cinnamon and garnet. They're perfect partners for the dark greens of many of our native plants.

Remember this is one of the best times to plant trees and shrubs. Plants are going into dormancy and will spend energy growing roots. Some of the literature you'll find recommends adding peat moss, compost and potting soil to the planting hole. The hazard in amending is the plant grows happily in that small space refusing to send out roots into the rest of your garden soil. After using up all the enrichments the plant eventually dies or fails to thrive. The exception is if you've had to till up and amend your whole gardening area. Avoid fertilizing. You don't want to encourage the plant to produce tender new growth with winter heading our way. Remember to water your plant on planting day and each week after unless monsoons begin and Moth Nature waters for you.

Be sure to check out Japanese Maples, blueberries, azaleas, rhododendrons, red and yellow twig dogwood, and many of the viburnum and hydrangeas available this time of year, each with it's own unique and striking fall brilliance. Be quick, you might have to use your imagination, plants are losing their leaves quickly. Another colorful plant is Callicarpa, commonly called beautyberry, a deciduous shrub with tiny, long-lasting, brilliant lavender-purple bb-size berries all up and down its stems. If you see it you'll want it. Origanum (ornamental oregano) is a non-edible perennial plant. One Origanum has long dark stems festooned with flowers that resemble wheat sheaves, except with minute grains. Each flower is deep dark purple. The flower-strewn stems dry easily (almost instantly) and work well in arrangements and wreaths.

Oxydendrum arboreum (a deciduous small tree) has brilliant orange and red fall foliage. Mixed in with the brilliant leaves are lily-of-the-valley-like flowers. The flowers stay on the tree all winter. During the growing season the leaves are shiny and appear evergreen. Oxydendrum arboreum is commonly called Sourwood Tree. Most books say it will grow 20 to 50 feet tall. Our tree is nine years old and not even twenty feet tall. It seems to grow about one foot per year.

Another excellent, fairly small tree (and native) is Amelanchier. It can also be a shrub and is commonly called Juneberry, shadblow and serviceberry. The fall color is magnificent with brilliant red and orange hues. It's one of the earliest plants to bloom in the spring with each branch covered with bright white blossoms. Varieties A. alnifolia grow to 20 feet, A. Canadensis grows to 25 feet, and A. laevis grows to 40 feet.

Two of our favorite evergreen azaleas for color are Hino crimson and Stewartstonianum. My husband talked me into buying them and I'm glad he did. Hino crimson has tiny, deep red, abundant blossoms in early spring. Stewartstonianum's blossoms are orange-red. The foliage on both azaleas is dark green turning bronze in the fall, lasting all winter. Both varieties are gorgeous throughout all four seasons. So far both varieties have been resistant to azalea leaf gall too.

What are you waiting for? Trek on down to your local nursery and pick up a few plants for fall color.

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