



WINTER LANDSCAPING

Uncommon Choices

Whether you're enjoying your winter garden from inside or out, under the sun or at night using landscape lighting, it's important to choose plant material that has a special appeal to you.

Beauty in winter is primarily expressed through structure and form. Consider using unusual plants that have interesting barks, pleasing shapes, colors, and movement. These elements will enhance the garden not only in winter but throughout the year."

Dancing in the Wind

Beauty and motion can be found in a genus of plants that include the ornamental grasses. Ranging from the dainty six-inch *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Little Bunny' to the spectacular twelve foot tall *Miscanthus floridus* 'Gigantes' (Giant Chinese Silver Grass), these plants require only good soil, a sunny location, and a spring trim to thrive.

Miscanthus sinensis 'Zebrinus' (Zebra grass) is a good example of the special effects that can be achieved in winter. Growing to nearly eight feet in height, its elegant gold-barred green blades assume a graceful fountain shape in summer that proves imperturbable in cold weather. Even freezing rains in March, that temporarily flatten the grass' winter-hued amber blades, cannot keep it down. Moments after the ice melts, the entire clump springs back up to resume waving in the slightest of breezes, providing welcome movement and sound in the garden. Ornamental grasses previously cut back in the fall are often left until spring so that they can be included in landscape lighting.

Berry Nice

Color is also achievable at this time of year. Berries on trees and shrubs are brilliant in contrast to the drifts of snow and will last through the winter if not taken by the birds. *Ilex verticillata* 'Winter Red' (Winterberry) is a lovely shrub whose female members will respond to a nearby male plant with clusters of crimson fruit along their artfully poised branches. Growing to a height of 9 feet and equally wide, this is an ideal selection for gardens with limited space.

Malus 'Red Jade' is a medium sized tree that possesses an artistic Japanese profile. The weeping habit of this

unusually-shaped crabapple is accompanied by interesting bark and red fruit.

With its wide-spreading sweep of horizontal branches having showy clusters of fruit turning from scarlet to black, *Viburnum tomentosum* also has an elegant Japanese shape.

Barking up the right tree

One of the loveliest of trees in any season is *Acer griseum* (Paperbark Maple), an exquisite specimen with rich cinnamon-colored exfoliating bark that unravels in wide ringlets. Growing to 25 feet, its exfoliating habit begins on two to three year old branches that can best be enjoyed when the tree is disrobed of its leafy summer cloak.

Familiar upright evergreens can convey a sense of protection in winter as well as provide privacy. Rarer forms of evergreens that weep or that have unusual needles, berries and cones can become living sculptures. *Pinus densiflora* 'Oculus Draconis' (Dragon's Eye Pine) is slow-growing and has gorgeous yellow-striped needles that spring straight from its branches like the points of a porcupine.

For gardeners who have the freedom of space, *Fagus sylvatica* 'pendula' (Weeping European Beech) is a splendid estate tree with picturesque curling branches that cascade to the ground. Additional attributes include its propensity for keeping its leaves long into the fall and smooth pearl-gray bark that eventually develops a deep rivulet formation.

Choose Bamboo

Bamboo is a plant that most people associate with tropical climates; however, there are at least eight varieties that can be successfully grown in Western New York.

Few other plants are as stunning when viewed against an early December snowfall as *Arundinaria graminea*, a tall frothy bamboo that reaches nine feet and retains its bright green color well into the winter. Only when temperatures fall below zero does it turn amber above the snowline where it nevertheless continues its airy performance. Perfect for screening purposes and as an elegant backdrop for Japanese anemones, this plant is aggressive in its growth behavior, needing strict barriers to keep it under control.

Come in for suggestions and help with your Winter planting.

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