

Under-Used Plant Varieties

When it comes to garden landscapes, so many plant varieties are worthy of use in our home gardens and commercially. Whether they possess a particular flower, foliage, color or fruit, we typically see a similar pallet across our zone. From wax leaf begonias, phlox, ornamental grasses, Japanese maples to various hostas, the landscape is pretty consistent.

With all of these desirable characteristics, some plant materials are simply overlooked and under-used. Consider some of these and your landscape will be unique. The following are a list of trees, grasses, junipers and shrubs that you may want to consider including in the coming seasons.

Trees

Trident Maple – This tree provides year-round interest and tolerates a variety of soil conditions. It's great on patios and for small yards and is quite popular with bonsai hobbyists because of its leaves and thickening trunk and roots that voluntarily curls around rocks.

Sawtooth Oak – The Sawtooth Oak adapts to a wide range of soil and climate conditions. The leaves provide visual interest and change to a brilliant yellow/golden yellow in the spring and a beautiful golden brown in the fall. It grows at a fast rate and its huge canopy provides great shade.

Shantung Maple – This gorgeous, low maintenance, sun-loving tree provides exceptional fall color. The Shantung's native climate in China is similar to ours and they are very elegant and stately in our landscape. They prefer full sun but can do well in part shade. Once established the annual growth rate is about 3 feet and can live 100 years or more.

Grasses

Shenandoah Switch Grass – Valued for its red foliage, the grass blades are a beautiful green with a red tip. By fall, that color intensifies and the plants turn red and orange. This grass appreciates regular deep watering; however, it will survive our dry summers and does well in xeriscapes. This striking colored grass grows to 5 feet tall and 18 inches wide.

Oldgold Carex – This very distinctive Japanese sedge grass has a creamy white blade with bold green edges. It a great companion to other plants, mulch and gravel. You can propagate it by seed and it is deer tolerant. This grass grows well in planters too and gets to a height of 10-12 inches by 20 inches wide. This beautiful plant grows in either sun or shade but, to obtain the best color, it requires part shade.

Blue Dune Lyme Grass – Known for its lovely blue-grey foliage, this rarely seen grass grows as densely tufted spreading clumps. In summer, the blades grow upright and have an awesome blue-grey flower spikes that turn light beige. This grass spreads by rhizomes and can be aggressive but is great for erosion control and as a potted plant.

Junipers

Grey Owl Juniper – The Grey Owl is a finely textured evergreen shrub with arching branches with soft, silver-grey foliage. It is quite attractive when planted en masse. It also looks beautiful as a tall groundcover and a low growing hedge. This beauty does best if sheltered from harsh afternoon sun and requires little maintenance. Once established, it is drought tolerant. You can expect growth of 3-feet tall and about 6-feet wide.

Red Star Atlantic White Cedar - This beautiful juniper is compact and dense with a columnar growth habit. It has blue-green summer foliage and, during winter, the color changes to a gorgeous plum-purple. The Red Star will grow 15-25 feet and have a canopy up to 8 feet.

Shrubs

Winterhur Viburnum – The Viburnum provides color and interest throughout the growing seasons. This showy shrub attracts pollinators in the spring and its blooms turn to clusters of bright pink berries that birds love. In order to achieve a bumper crop of berries, make certain to plant it near another cultivar. This shrub has shiny green foliage that turns maroon in the fall. This lovely shrub will grow up to 6 feet tall.

Moonshadow Eunonymus – This colorful shrub is perfect for jazzing up a garden bed or border. The dark green margins encircle the bright yellow center on each

leaf and are dappled with a bit of pink in the fall and winter. The texture provides year-round interest. This beauty grows 12-24 inches and spreads up to 36 inches, making it a great ground cover.

Blue Maid Holly – The leaves on this under-used shrub have cool tones and ornamental red holly berries that appear in the fall just when the garden needs some new color. It helps keep the landscape looking great through the winter. The Blue Maid Holly grows up to 15 feet tall and does well in full sun to partial shade.

So, when it comes to our gardens, whether small, large container, or patio, consider stepping outside of the comfort zone and introduce some of the underused plant materials into your landscape. They are certain to be a conversation starter and may encourage proliferation across our unique planting zone.