EIGHT NATIVE SHRUBS FOR KNOCKOUT FALL COLOR
By Chris Ferrero, Master Gardener Volunteer

You're not alone if you've learned to depend on shrubs like Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus*) and Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) for foliage color in the fall landscape. Especially in our northern zones, they have long been go-to shrubs for the brilliant color they add to a time of the year when your perennial gardens can look pretty tired.

What's forcing Hudson Valley gardeners to reconsider is the fact that those two species are among those recently designated as prohibited or regulated invasive species by New York State, removing many favorite species from nurseries and garden centers completely. ([Click here](#) for more details.) But the lemons-to-lemonade story is that there are so many more wonderful native species that have been waiting for your attention.

A Dutchess County Master Gardener Volunteer committee has been working this year to assemble alternatives to New York State's list of invasive herbaceous plants, trees, shrubs and vines. The MG Shrub Team - Michelle Keeley, Cathy Lane, Mary Gall and I, led by Joyce Tomaselli - has highlighted eight favorite natives for fall color:

1. **Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)**
   Of all the many versatile, hardy types of hydrangeas, only the Oakleaf Hydrangea delivers a full four seasons of interest. Its beautiful blossoms appear mid-summer as huge panicles that slowly age from bright white to pink, to bronze in autumn. Like other hydrangeas, the blossoms can be attractive to deer. But its huge, oak-shaped leaves that turn beautiful shades of orange and red through late fall, and the exfoliating wood that peels back to shades of gold in winter, are great payback for any space you can give these landscape workhorses. They can grow to 6' tall and wide, and make a dense hedge, but many smaller varieties are commonly available. They love moist acidic soil, and can tolerate quite a bit of shade.
2. Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*)
Many consider this beauty one of the best summer-flowering shrubs for shade areas, one that can thrive under a high canopy of filtered light. Typically 6-12' tall, this shrub is spectacular in June and July, covered with cylindrical panicles (to 12" long) of tubular white flowers - a buffet for hummingbirds - with red anthers and pinkish filaments. Then its foliage turns a clear yellow gold in autumn to light up the shade and offer stunning contrast at forest's edge. Bottlebrush Buckeye enjoys rich, moist, loamy woodland-type soil, but does very well as a large lawn or shrub border specimen.

3. Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)
Ninebark is a big (5-9' high), striking shrub that tolerates drought, rocky soil, and erosion, and still delivers unusual ornamental interest. In late spring it features delicate pink or white spirea-like flower corymbs that attract hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators. Its exfoliating bark peels in strips to reveal layers of reddish bark for winter interest. And Ninebark's high-contrast foliage color isn't limited to the fall season, depending on the cultivar. For example, 'Diabolo' has dark purple leaves, while 'Dart's Gold' is a more compact 4-5' plant with bright golden yellow foliage that takes on bronze notes in autumn, and 'Center Glow' is a cross between the two that begins greenish-gold but ages to burgundy, with leaves showing both colors as they mature. 'Coppertina' has coppery foliage that ages to bright red by summer and into fall. This is a shrub that prefers dry to medium moisture, and sun to part shade.

4. Red and Black Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia, melanocarpus*)
Of all the natives listed here, this big, vase-shaped shrub most closely resembles Burning Bush. But there's lots more to like: Beautiful white/light pink spirea-like flowers in spring, glossy dark green leaves that turn red in autumn (purplish red on the black chokeberry, and orange red on the red chokeberry), and clusters of berries for the birds from late summer into winter. Aronia can thrive in wet, even boggy soil, like at the edge of ponds or streams. Though it can sucker and colonize like burning bush, a cultivar like 'Brilliantissima' is more compact (grows slowly to 6-8' tall) and produces more lustrous foliage and fruit than the species.
5. Spicebush or Sweet Pepper Bush (Lindera benzoin)

Another shrub that fills space beautifully (at 6-12’), Lindera enjoys moist locations at woodland’s edge or along streams. It is prized for its very early show of charming clusters of fluffy, fragrant, greenish-yellow flowers that bloom along its branches and last a long time before its foliage emerges. Its light green leaves are aromatic when crushed, and turn a glorious yellow in autumn. This shrub famously hosts the larva of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

6. Blueberry (Vaccinium)

Of course blueberry bushes are native, but you may not know they become beautiful ornamental shrubs in the fall with stunning red foliage. And once they’ve dropped their leaves, the old wood can provide striking form through the winter. Blueberries are eaten by a wide array of birds, and it is a host plant for striped hairstreak and Henry’s elfin butterflies. This shrub needs moist, high-acid soil, and for best harvest be sure to plant at least three bushes of two different varieties.

7. Virginia Sweetspire (Itea virginica)

Itea is a medium-sized shrub - typically 3-4’ tall - valued for its late spring to early summer show of cascading, pure white and lightly scented bottlebrush-type blooms that attract butterflies and other pollinators. Its dark green foliage turns fiery shades of red, orange and gold for a long period in autumn, often persisting on the plants until early winter. It can be happy in sun or shade as long as the soil remains moist or even boggy, making it a perfect rain garden plant. Commonly available are the old favorite ‘Henry’s Garnet’, and a more compact version at 2-3’, ‘Little Henry’.

8. Fothergilla (Fothergilla gardenii)

Known as dwarf fothergilla, Fothergilla gardenii is a versatile ornamental that is compact (2-3’), slow-growing, and a good garden or foundation shrub that can also be grown as a small hedge. Short spikes of fragrant white flowers emerge in spring before the leaves appear. Then its blue-green leaves turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange and red in fall. It enjoys moist, acidic, organically rich, well-drained soil in full sun to part shade, and thrives particularly in morning sun. As with several other natives listed here, its suckers may colonize if not removed.

With the exception of oak leaf hydrangea, none of these natives is attractive to deer... but they are all rated A for attracting admiration of color-loving gardeners!
ANOTHER NEW AND FABULOUS BOOK
By Donna Croshier, CCEDC Master Gardener Volunteer

While gathering material for my latest (and as yet untried ) Power Point presentation on succulents, I found a fantastic book that I think everyone should take note of, even if the topic isn’t one you intend to pursue right now. The glorious pictures, detailed general information and organization make this a real winner.

The book is entitled *Idiot’s Guide to Succulents* (2015) written by Cassidy Tuttle. Although it sounds like a rather silly title, containing perhaps some minor hints on these plants, I was absolutely blown away by the book. The pictures are outstanding, the information is extremely thorough and the overall organization makes this a highly user friendly, comprehensive book filled with everything you might need to know about succulents and more.

Part One is a general intro; Part Two talks about caring for succulents including propagation, watering and repotting; Part Three explores selecting and arranging them and Part Four has over seventy pages of DIY projects including putting plants in wreaths, pumpkins, strawberry pots, birdcages, dish gardens and bouquets to name a few.

But it is Part Five that hits the home run for this book. There are about one hundred pages, each with a full page devoted to one particular plant with a gorgeous picture and full information including scientific name, watering and light needs, height, hardiness zones and other plants that can be paired with this one for a dramatic look. Some must be inside plants, but many can endure outside temps down to 20 degrees. I sat and read through this section like a novel, I was so fascinated.

Not only did I gain material for my talk, but I became enchanted with the many varieties that I’d never known or even heard of, and now I am planning on trying to find a spot for a succulent garden somewhere to show off some of these varied and dramatic beauties.

So if you like Hens and Chickens, trust me, that’s just a drop in a very big bucket of fabulous succulent plants, plants that require VERY little care. Take a look at this book and you’ll be drooling to get some!

PLANNING AHEAD CAN IMPROVE NEXT YEAR’S GARDEN
By Barb Kull, Master Gardener Volunteer

I must admit upfront I am primarily a vegetable gardener. If you only grow flowers most of what I have to say might not apply to you. But it might inspire you to grow vegetables. Even one tomato plant will give you a great opportunity to experience the taste of a truly fresh vegetable.

As fall turns to winter, garden cleanup should include planning for next year. Consider the success of the crops you planted. Grab a pad and mark what did well - not only the vegetable but the variety. Then make a note where you bought it or if you grew it from seed.
I make a lot of sauce so my favorite tomato is ‘Amish Paste’. It is very sweet and meaty with more pulp than seeds. Another favorite is ‘Carmen’ peppers. Both of these varieties are sold at our plant sale every year. This year I bought a beefsteak tomato at our plant sale, but I did not keep the tag. It was fabulous but I don’t know what variety it was. I saved the seed for next year hoping it was an heirloom variety which will grow true to seed. This year I also planted ‘Ya-Ya’ carrots. WOW! They were great! But I did not plant enough. So I made a note “More carrots for 2017” and plan to move their location to accommodate the increase.

Did you have pests? If so, you need to rotate your crops to fool the squash borer or potato beetle etc. that will hide in your soil just waiting to attack next year’s crops. This can easily be accomplished by relocating the plants or not planting any next year.

Veggie people this is the best time to attack your garden with compost, shredded leaves, grass clippings from the year or mulch so that our best friends the composters can work their magic. I will top dress my garden with 2-4 inches of compost which will insulate the soil as winter comes and reduce compaction in spring. This will allow me to be ready to turn it in when spring rolls around, which comes very quickly some years.

If you like root vegetables such as carrots, amend the soil now with some crushed leaves turned in with a garden fork. Organisms will break the leaves down over the winter which will improve its structure and make it easier for the plants to take up nutrients.

Now is the time too, to dig before layering with mulch. I cannot say that enough. YES I do hand dig I must admit quite slowly at my tender age of over 60 but it is great therapy and to me energizing being out in the garden.

I hope I have encouraged some of you to think about next year, to learn from your mishaps and stay positive. Growing can be fun especially if you eat what you grow. There is nothing better than a fresh tomato, broccoli head, green beans or peas from your garden!

Rest up this winter. With the shorter days I feel as if I go into hibernation but that is OK after the long growing season. I am looking forward to the lack of garden chores and hoping old man winter will be kind to us.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

- Cornell Woody Plants Database
- Cornell Growing Native Plants from Seed
- Cornell Invertebrates of the Compost Pile
- Hag Moth or Monkey Slug Caterpillar Fact Sheet
- Stinging Caterpillars: Slug Caterpillars and Flannel Moths
UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday November 6, 2016, 2:00, the Hudson Valley Iris & Daylily Society will host a lecture presented by Amy Howansky on "Beautiful Flowering Trees and Shrubs". Amy is the owner of Backyard Solutions and is a certified landscaping and nursery professional. The meeting is at the Marlboro Free Library, route 9w, Marlboro, NY 12542. The meeting begins at 2 pm, but please join us at 1:30 to socialize with snacks and beverages provided by the clubs members. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Wednesday, November 16, 10am, the Rhinebeck Garden Club will host a program at the Rhinebeck Town Hall. Scott Zimmer of Zimmer Gardens in Kingston will talk about "Holiday Containers: Extend the Garden Season with Garden inspired Holiday Containers and Decor for Your Property, Both inside and Out". Containers will be available for sale. Refreshments served. Prospective new members welcome. Contact Steven Mann, 876-6892.

SUBMIT UPCOMING EVENTS

Would you like to submit information on an upcoming gardening event to be shared in this newsletter? Please send an email to Nancy Halas at nh26@cornell.edu or Joyce Tomaselli jdt225@cornell.edu by the 25th of each month to be included in the next month’s newsletter. Please include the date, time, location, a short description, cost and contact information for more details.

MONTHLY ID QUIZ

These photos are of an insect brought to our office a few weeks ago. It is the coolest thing I’ve seen in a while. The photo on my finger is the topside. In the jar is from underneath. It is a monkey slug caterpillar. I was advised by a Cornell entomologist that odd insects like this SHOULD NOT BE TOUCHED until they are identified and it is ensured they can cause no harm.
Need Soil pH Testing? Need Lawn or Plant Diagnosis?
Have any gardening questions?

The Horticulture Hotline, (845) 677-5067 is closed for the season. Questions can also be submitted through our website at www.CCEDutchess.org/gardening

Samples for identification or diagnosis can be submitted any day 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. There is a $15 fee for samples. Visit our Horticulture Diagnostic Lab website for reliable resources and information on our services. Samples for identification or diagnosis can be submitted all year long. There is a $15 fee for samples. Visit our Horticulture Diagnostic Lab page for more resources and information on our services.

HELP SPREAD THE DIRT! Please forward a copy to anyone you think might be interested. To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or submit upcoming gardening events, contact Nancy Halas at nh26@cornell.edu, www.ccedutchess.org.

Websites mentioned in Dutchess Dirt are provided as a courtesy to our readers. Mention of these websites does not imply endorsement by Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension or by the author.

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