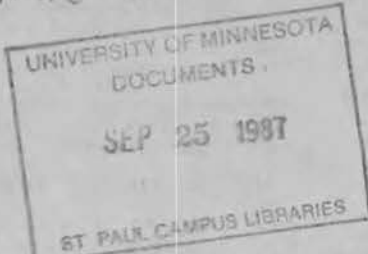


Arboretum Review



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Plants with colored foliage

Nurserymen and gardeners have expressed considerable interest in plants with colored summer foliage. A few of these plants, used for accent purposes, can add interest to a shrub border. A few years ago we started to bring all woody, deciduous plant materials together in one area of the arboretum. The Minnesota Garden Flower Society partly supports this collection. The following are some of the deciduous trees and shrubs having colored or variegated foliage:

***Acer platanoides* 'Crimson King' (Crimson King Norway Maple)**—This Norway Maple has dark purplish-red leaves that maintain this color all season. The trees have been perfectly hardy in the arboretum but die-back often occurs in areas much north of the Twin Cities and even on sandy soils in the Twin Cities area. This is a good accent tree in areas where it is adapted.

***Acer platanoides* 'Drummondii' (Variegated Norway Maple)**—This maple has white-margined leaves. It is not as vigorous as the species and the foliage is subject to wind damage. Plant only in very protected sites in the range suggested for Crimson King.

***Acer platanoides* 'Fassen's Red Leaf'**— This and 'Fassen's Black' are very similar to 'Crimson King' and can be used in the same manner.

***Acer platanoides* 'Schwedleri' (Schwedler Norway Maple)**— This cultivar has red leaves when it first comes into leaf, but the leaves turn green in a few weeks. Plant the 'Crimson King' where red leaves are desired during the summer months.

***Amorpha canescens* (Lead Plant)**—This native plant has silvery foliage and grows on well-drained soils. It grows to about 3 feet high and has spikes of blue, pea-like flowers. It is perfectly hardy and can be planted in the foreground of the shrub border.

***Berberis thunbergii* 'Atropurpurea' (Red-leaf Japanese Barberry)**— This red-leaved form of the Japanese barberry is often planted for accent purposes. Too often it is planted along with the golden mockorange to the exclusion of all other combinations. Nurseries are inclined to propagate the variety by seeds, with the result that plants with inferior leaf color are often sold.

***Berberis thunbergii* 'Atropurpurea Nana'**—This is the same as the 'Crimson Pygmy' cultivar in the nursery trade. It is low, reaching a height of only about 1 foot. It can be used under low windows, as a hedge, or as a ground cover plant. It may tip kill in an open winter, but it soon recovers. 'Red Bird' and 'Rosy Glow' are new color variations that have just been added to our collection. We have not observed them for a long enough time to recommend them.

***Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple' (Royal Purple Smokebush)**— There are several red-leaved forms of the common smokebush. Royal Purple, when vegetatively propagated, has given uniformly good results. 'Velvet Cloak' is a new cultivar that recently has been added to our collection that may be just as good. Most of the colored-leaved cultivars dieback each winter. As soon as growth starts in the spring, the dead wood should be removed. The plants quickly recover and will give a spot of color in the border all season. The branches can be cut and used in flower arrangements.

***Cornus alba* 'Argenteo-marginata' (Variegated Dogwood)**— This is the best of the variegated shrubs. It is fully hardy and develops into an attractive shrub about 6 feet tall. The leaves are green with white margins. Apparently, two strains of this cultivar are on the market. The one with the broader band of white should be planted when you can choose. This is an excellent plant for accent in the shrub border. It is often used in the foundation planting where space permits.



***Cornus alba* 'Argenteo-marginata' (Variegated Dogwood)**

***Cornus alba* 'Gouchaultii'**— This cultivar is similar except the variegation is yellowish and pink. ***Cornus alba* 'Spaethi'** has leaves with yellow leaf margins.

***Elaeagnus angustifolia* (Russian Olive)**— This is a small tree that grows to a height of about 25 feet. The leaves are elongated and silvery white. The leaves are broad and somewhat curled. They are covered with silvery hairs that give the plant a silvery appearance. Excellent in flower arrangements and as a contrast shrub, this shrub suckers freely and makes a good bank cover. We have had some problems with defoliation in a wet season.

***Elaeagnus commutata* (Silverberry)**— The silverberry is native in northwestern Minnesota and north and westward to Alaska and the west coast. It grows on well-drained soils and prefers regions of low rainfall. The leaves are broad and somewhat curled. They are covered with silvery hairs that give the plant a silvery appearance. Excellent in flower arrangements and as a contrast shrub, this shrub suckers freely and makes a good bank cover. We have had some problems with defoliation in a wet season.

***Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Sunburst'**— The new foliage on the honeylocust is a golden yellow. Particularly effective in spring and early summer, the plants stand out at a distance. Use as a specimen tree in the lawn. 'Ruby-lace' is another honeylocust with colored foliage. The leaves are a brownish red in summer. We have been disappointed in the performance of this cultivar. Possibly on a lighter soil the color might be brighter.

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Hippophaea rhamnoides (Russian Sea Buckthorn)—This is an excellent silvery-leaved plant. The leaves are narrow and willowlike. It can be grown either as a large shrub or as a small, single-stemmed tree. The fruits are small, orange-yellow berries. These are borne only on the female plants. Use in the shrub border or as a specimen tree.

Ligustrum spp. (Golden Privet)— There are several golden privets. *L. x vicaryi*, a common golden form that is regularly available in the trade, has not proven hardy. A golden-leaved form we obtained some years ago from Hillside Nursery in South St. Paul has been surprisingly hardy. It sometimes tip kills, but soon outgrows this injury.

Malus 'Royalty' (Royalty Crabapple)— This has the reddest foliage of any of the crabapples. It was developed at Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, so it is fully hardy. Unfortunately, it is subject to fireblight and this may limit its usefulness. 'Red Silver', a cultivar developed in South Dakota, is almost as red and is less subject to the fireblight disease.

Philadelphus coronarius 'Aureus' (Golden Mockorange)— This is the most widely planted of the yellow-leaved shrubs. Actually, the foliage is bright yellow in early spring, turning to a greenish yellow by early summer. The foliage is subject to wind injury and sometimes looks ragged toward fall. Use for accent in the shrub border.

Physocarpus opulifolius 'Luteus'— This is a coarse shrub with rather attractive golden foliage throughout most of the growing season. Old plants are inclined to be rather tall and leggy. Use as an accent in the background of the shrub border.

Populus alba (White Poplar)— This widespread tree has attractive maple-shaped leaves that are white underneath. 'Nivea' is a cultivar that has especially white leaves. This tree species suckers badly and should not be planted unless you have unlimited space.

Prunus x cistena (Cistena Cherry)—This hybrid resulting from a cross between *P. pumila* x *P. cerasifera atropurpurea* is also called Purpleleaf Sand Cherry. It is one of the most popular of our red-leaved shrubs. It was developed in South Dakota by the late Dr. N. E. Hansen and is fully hardy. It is widely planted for accent purposes in the border and in foundation plantings. The plants are normally 5 to 6 feet tall, and the foliage is a bright purplish-red color.

Prunus 'Newport'— This is another hybrid between *Prunus americana*, the American Plum, x *P. cerasifera atropurpurea*. It is much larger than the Cistena cherry, but otherwise is quite similar. Plant as a specimen tree or use at the back of the shrub border.

Prunus virginiana 'Shubert'—This large shrub or small tree was selected from the wilds in North Dakota and introduced by Oscar Wills of Bismarck. It is quite unusual in that the new growth is a bright green that gradually turns to a bronzy red. This is a very hardy plant and makes an effective lawn specimen or a screen planting. We have many favorable comments on these plants in the arboretum.

Rosa rubrifolia (Redleaf Rose)— This is the only rose that has colored foliage. Both the leaves and the young stems have a bluish-green color, tinged purplish-red. Its flowers are deep red, single, and rather small. The plant is grown mostly for its colored foliage and bright red fruits.

Salix exigua (Coyote willow)—This shrub willow has silvery green foliage that is quite striking. The plant suckers badly so plant it on a slope where it can help hold the soil. If it is used as a specimen plant, it should be grafted on a non-suckering species. It does well on *Salix alba*.

Sambucus canadensis 'Aurea'— This is a golden-leaved form of the American elder. The fruits are a cherry red color, quite unlike the black fruits of the species. This elder is sometimes used as an accent in the border.

Sambucus racemosa 'Sutherland Golden'— This is a new cultivar from Saskatchewan of the European red elder. It looks very good so far in our trials. It may be subject to a cane borer, which has been a problem on other cultivars of this species.

Shepherdia argentea (Buffaloberry)— This is another western species that prefers a well-drained site. The foliage is a silvery green and quite attractive. Sexes are separate so plant several to be certain of having both. Female plants are covered with bright red fruits in mid summer. These fruits were used by the Indians in making pemican. Birds also love the fruits. As the plants mature, the inner branches have a tendency to die. Use as a background shrub in the border. A mature plant may grow 15 feet or taller.

Weigela florida 'Variegata'— The variegated weigela is a medium-sized shrub growing to about 5 feet high. The flowers are pink and quite showy in early June. Intermittent bloom may occur throughout the summer. The leaves are bordered with yellow, giving an interesting foliage pattern. Occasionally the plant grows too late in the fall and the tips of the stems will die back a few inches. This is not too serious because the new growth will soon hide the injury. This is one of the better variegated shrubs.

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