

Autumn Color I

JANUARY 2003 by Joan Sargent

The ground is covered with snow but it is not technically winter yet, that will happen on December 22, I will keep to my original plan and write a little about useful small trees and shrubs that are underused and light up the landscape with their vibrant colors in the fall.

I like to put plants together that will be showy at the same time, making a more interesting vignette than having them scattered about the garden.

Rugosa roses, native viburnums, especially the maple leaf acerifolium, and the Kousa dogwood grouped together have the most vibrant red and purple foliage as does the oak leaf Hydrangea. If you prefer yellow, Parrotia with the yellowing foliage of kerria and the large dying leaves of the Hosta Sum and Substance go through November looking cheery.

More good golden foliage comes from our native Witch Hazels. *Hamamelis virginiana* blooms around November and its spidery, strong fragrant flowers are frost-proof. A warmish day in February will have the variety *Vernalis* give off its sweet smell. A small sprig of either of these will scent your house and give you hope that spring will come. If you have grown the hybrids, perhaps 'Arnold's Promise', be aware these two natives are shrubs because they are multistemmed, but they can grow to 30 feet.

I do think we plant too much for May to September rather forgetting the earlier and later months of the year. Flowering shrubs and small trees improve in beauty and require less or no maintenance each year. I strongly urge you to let their leaves lie under them as nature intended, letting them decay on the surface, this will become a mulch and a food for the plant, again lessening your work and improving the health of the plant.

Joan Sargent, a longtime member and master gardener who passed away in August 2012; wrote many gardening columns through the years for our newsletter. We are reprinting them.



Hamamelis virginiana-- colorful in fall



Parrotia persica-- is closely related to Witch Hazels. aka Persian ironwood.



Viburnum sargentii 'Onandaga' in the fall, above.

Below right, Oak leaf Hydrangea in fall splendor.

Below left -- Maple leaf Viburnum *V. Acerifolium*.



Hosta Sum and Substance's huge lime green leaves.

