

DIGGING IN

WINTER SPLENDOR

With this issue, we introduce a new garden column, penned by landscape designer Brian Wildeman of Landscapes by Dallas Foster, Inc. The company specializes in naturalized design, which inspired by the elements of nature, maximizes the use of native species.

A GARDEN SHOULD APPEAL TO SENSES, and that is no different for a garden in winter. Imagine looking out and watching snow settle on the branches of your favorite tree. Taste and feel the coldness of the snow and hear the birds chirping and the branches swaying about. A lot of emotions can be stirred up with a simple glance outside.

Most people think that a garden in winter is unsightly – dormant or dead, simply waiting for beauty to return with the spring. But winter can be one of the best times to enjoy the views of the garden as various colors and textures reveal some of the most interesting characteristics after the leaves fall away. The key is to incorporate elements that have multi-seasonal appeal.

Who hasn't received a holiday card with a picture of a cardinal sitting on a berry- and snow-covered branch? The inspiration for the image is the Winter King green hawthorn, an ornamental tree native to Southwest Indiana. While it's known for the bright red berries it produces in the fall, it's glorious year-round with a white flower that blooms brilliantly in the spring and fall colors of bronze, red, and gold. The tree is rounded, and its vase-shaped branches are covered in glossy green foliage in summer. It does sprout thorns though, so be careful where you plant it.

There are many other plants that produce berries in the fall that last into the early winter. Among our favorite are the Aronia varieties, known as chokeberries. These are extremely adaptable shrubs that can grow almost anywhere. The black chokeberry has a bluish-black glossy fruit that hangs down in clusters of 10 or so from red pedicels. The fruit is bitter, which attracts songbirds and upland game birds as well as small mammals.



A Winter King green hawthorn frames the winter landscape

Another favorite: The Winterberry, a native holly that loses its leaves each autumn, making its berry display all the more showy. Deep into winter, it offers a breathtaking view of brightly colored berries clinging to every stem. A truly unique plant is the American Beautyberry, a deciduous shrub that grows to six feet in height. It blooms in summer with light purple flowers that grow along the twigs at the base of the leaf axils. By fall, the blooms develop into clusters of dark purple berries that attract birds through the winter.

Berries aren't the only element that will visually warm the garden in winter. Consider choosing trees that have eye-catching bark, like the Paperbark maple, which has a cinnamon and reddish brown bark that peels away.

Winter is the perfect time to develop a garden journal. It can help you keep track of what you'd like to plant in your garden, and the progress of what you do add to it. One suggestion: Jot down what you do and don't like about your current garden and begin to look for ways to make the changes. Clip pictures from magazines of the gardens you covet and begin to research what it would take to transform your garden, noting such things as soil conditions, the need for sun or shade, and, of course, how it will look throughout every season.

— Brian Wildeman

PHOTO BY BRIAN WILDEMAN

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