

FALL COLOR

The last days of summer are upon us and soon the lush green color of our landscapes will begin turning golden yellow and brilliant red. Now is the time to prepare for a festive holiday landscape by adding fall colored foliage to your yard.

In northern Nevada the blazing yellow of the quaking Aspen trees (*Populus tremuloides*) will begin to spot the mountain sides and fill in the valleys like melted gold. This is the main fall color of the western landscape and many homeowners want to bring this beauty into their yard. The water loving aspen tree can have a place in the landscape with some careful thought on its placement. Aspen, usually seen in clumps, spreads by its roots and given the right conditions can become invasive. When placing an aspen tree it will be important to maintain the tree by keeping suckers cut back especially in smaller yards where the tree doesn't have a place to expand.

Ginkgo trees (*Ginkgo biloba*) are another choice for radiant fall color. Their dainty fan shaped yellow leaves can not be mistaken. This tree is attractive throughout the growing season and puts on a quite a color display in the fall. If you're looking for more seasonal yellow in the landscape you can also try ornamental pear (*Pyrus* spp.) and little leaf linden (*Tillia cordata*).

For a spot of red there are a variety of trees that can provide vivid accents in the landscape. There are many varieties to choose from, though some are better suited for our high desert environment in northern Nevada. Some good varieties to try out include: scarlet oak (*Quercus coccinia*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), amur maple (*Acer ginnala*), and sweet gum (*Liquidamber styraciflua*) varieties.

There is more to fall color than the trees we commonly think of. Many shrubs that grow in our climates have exceptional color for a gleaming fall display. The most commonly known is probably burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*). Who can mistake the dazzling red of the burning bush; this shrub does well in our area and is an excellent choice for color in the fall landscape. This shrub, as its name suggests, turns bright red in the fall when planted in full sun. When placed in a shady area the foliage will reflect more pink tones. It also produces a reddish orange berry late in the summer that it holds through the winter months.

Another good choice is low grow sumac, (*Rhus aromatica* 'Gro Low'). This great plant can be used in a variety of places through the yard. It loves our Nevada sunshine and is also drought tolerant. The foliage of this shrub changes to a pleasing orange red color in the fall. This plant has spring flowers and late season fruit making it a good choice for interest throughout the growing season.

Need more variety? Try a chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*). This is a good filler plant with nice purple-red fall color. These shrubs are good for our area as they will grow well in Nevada's dry and sandy soils.

There is an abundance of fall blooming perennials that will keep your flower beds alive with color as the cooler days and dropping night temperatures approach. A great perennial to give a try for fall color is sedum (*Sedum* spp.). There are many varieties to choose from here with groundcovers types to the unforgettable Autumn Joy. For a more subtle touch of color try some coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.) This is a small flowering plant with bright yellow, orange and reddish flowers. The plant will bloom profusely through the summer and autumn months with a little maintenance and care.

Russian sage (*Pervoskia*) is a great woody plant that blends in nicely with our desert landscape. The silvery grey leaves accent the purple blooms that are placed up the branches of this perennial. Plants can become quite large in the landscape so place it appropriately. The blooms on this plant will flourish from mid summer through fall. This makes it a good choice for color in flower beds. Blue mist spirea (*Caryopteris clandonensis*) is also an alternative. This mounding shrub will provide deep blue flowers and green foliage. The plant will add color to the garden from mid summer to the first frost.

For a creative touch, add some seasonal interest, place pumpkins and gourds for some holiday flare to your surroundings. These are great fall vegetables that are full of rich colors from deep orange, creamy whites to maroon. They make great accents indoor and out. Placed in small containers or lining an entry they will surely make your house stand out from the rest.

The plants listed above are a good start to creating the backbone for a great fall display in your landscape. The best way to find color that will work in your yard is to make a trip to your local garden center. As always, seeing the plant choices available and discussing your needs with professionals will help you choose the best plants for your space. Adding the right fall colored plants to any yard will provide a vast color display for the months and seasons to come.