

Adding Fall Color to the Landscape

By Dawn Donovan, September, 2008

Our days are getting shorter and nights will soon become cooler. Fall in northern Nevada can be quite a sight as the aspen turns golden yellow on the mountains. Many look forward to this season not only for the comfortable temperatures but for the beauty the season brings into the valley and surrounding Sierra.

When most people think of fall their first thought is deciduous trees turning brilliant shades of red and yellow. Our home landscapes are the ideal locations to place trees and shrubs that offer vibrant fall color. And there are many spectacular trees and shrubs to choose from to create an amazing display of fall color.

For bursts of red in the landscape you can always count on maple trees. From the brilliant red of the amur maple to the many varieties of red maples there are more than a dozen maples that will bring shade, structure and color to your yard. If you're lucky enough to have an area with protection and shade you can place a majestic Japanese maple for interest and form.

Maples aren't the only red fall colored trees. Oaks, chokeberries and kousa dogwoods also put on a show of scarlet reds in the yards. The variety of trees available with red fall color is abundant, providing options for you to choose the right tree for the space available in your yard. And for brilliant purples, autumn purple ash is quite reliable.

Many of us enjoy the golden color of aspens in the hills and want to bring the yellow fall leaves into our landscape. However, aspens can be invasive in the residential landscape sending off shoots all over your yard as well as into your neighbors' yards. To avoid problems with your neighbors and unwanted aspen shoots, look to other yellow leaved favorites in their place. Some good choices for our area are honeylocust, sweetgum and ginkgo.

There are other colors from bronze to purples that can be found in the fall color palette. Visit your local independent garden center to see all the varieties of trees with fall color that are available at this time of year – the best time to plant.

Many landscapes have mature trees in place and may be lacking the fall hues you are looking for in your landscape. To add some seasonal spirit to the landscape look to shrubs, perennials, and annuals for a color punch. Virginia creeper and Boston ivy will add unforgettable reds to the landscape. Both are vines and can be a good cover for a trellis or on a fence in your yard. Burning bush is also a well sought after plant with a stunning fall color. Other good choices include sumacs,

heavenly bamboo and the never failing barberry. The award winning 'Tiger Eyes' sumac offers an unparalleled show of yellow, orange and intense scarlet.

There are a many great fall blooming perennials that do well in our area. Asters, chrysanthemums, sedums and euphorbias are all quite hardy and come in a wide variety of colors. And there are many fall blooming annuals that are cold hardy and will survive a mild frost – so don't be afraid to plant them. Pansies, violas, ornamental grasses, flowering cabbage and kales and more can grace your entries and flowerbeds for several more weeks to come.

Don't let the beauty of our fall season pass you by. Prepare your yard now and take advantage of all the great trees and shrubs your local garden centers have to offer now. What better way than to decorate than with Mother Nature's personal palette of colors, textures and forms!

Remember, fall is the best time to plant. The sun is not as hot and the temperatures are lower. The ground is warm so roots will to continue to grow. The larger root system will support more growth for the coming year. And watering needs are greatly reduced.