

WAY TO GROW

**Way to Grow in Orinda**

*Enhancing Your Garden's Fall*

**Color Palate**

Steve & Cathy Lambert



The Orinda News welcomes this new bi-monthly column by award-winning landscape artists Steve and Cathy Lambert.

Many Northern California gardeners are stuck in a rut of planting nothing but evergreen plant materials and trees. We believe this boring trend stems from the following four reasons. . .

1. Because they can. Evergreens do very well in our planting zone.

True, but why not add some seasonal interest with vibrant autumn colors that will actually provide a feeling of warmth in your garden during the cooler fall and winter months? A garden of all greens and blue can leave you feeling cold.

2. Because they believe the fall color choices appropriate for our area won't provide a spectacular display as they've seen on the East Coast.

True in part, we may not get the dramatic

array of fall foliage that east coast gardeners enjoy. However, a few well placed deciduous trees and shrubs can add lots of interest in a garden ready for a winter break. The two main environmental factors which determine the depth of brilliant reds, oranges and yellows are; long periods of colder temperatures (for which there is no guarantee in our area) and fewer daylight hours (which is a given).

3. Because they don't want to deal with the mess of trees that drop their leaves in the fall.

Yes, deciduous trees lose all their leaves late fall through winter, requiring more maintenance, but they are relatively clean for the rest of the year — a small price to pay for the added beauty fall color can bring to your garden. Besides, evergreen trees (much to most people's surprise) also replace all of their leaves annually. They just do it year-round rather than all at once creating a slow but steady maintenance issue.

4. They don't like the look of bare trees in the winter and want to screen undesirable views, i.e. the neighbor's house.

Ok, so you'll see some bare branches,

but only for two to three months tops. The term "Fall" color is almost a misnomer in Orinda. Many of our favorite fall color trees hold their color and their leaves well into the winter months and leaf out or bloom again by early February. There are also many deciduous trees that have a beautiful branching structure and bark that can only truly be appreciated in the winter. Each holiday season, our family hangs shiny gold and silver ornaments in two of our bare branch trees; then we shine light up on them. This provides a much more dramatic effect than the standard strand of holiday lights, because it highlights the tree's branch composition.

I agree that evergreens have many pluses in the garden, but why not expand your garden's fall color palate with some lesser known options?

There are so many good choices for "West Coast Color" that are under used in our area. This short list of our personal favorites is far from comprehensive, but it covers trees and plants that create strong contrasts against surrounding environments. These are all plants that we have used successfully in Orinda.

**Our Top 7 Fall Color Tree Picks**

Botanical	Common	Color & Bonuses	Final Height
Acer griseum	Paperbark Maple	Yellow leaves, peeling cinnamon bark	20 ft.
Acer palmatum	"Sango Kaku" Coral Bark /Japanese Maple	Bright yellow & Red Stems	15 ft.
Cornus florida	Flowering Dogwood	Yellow leaves awesome spring flowers	20ft.
Cornus	Red Twig Dogwood 'Mid Winters Fire'	Red twigs/white flowers	8 ft.
Euonymus europaea	European Tree/Burning Bush	Red leaves, white, red, & orange seed pods	10-12 ft.
Lagerstroemia indica	Crape Myrtle	Yellow & red leaves, late summer flwrs.	10-20 ft.
Parrotia persica	Persian Iron Wood	Dark red	20 ft.
Pistachio chinensis	Chinese Pistachio	Red with a touch of gold	30-40 ft.

**Our Top 7 Fall Color Shrub Picks**

Botanical	Common	Color & Bonuses
Aronia arbutifolia	Red Choke Berry	White flowers, red berries, great fall color
'Brilliantissima'		
Callicarpa bodinier	Purple Beauty Bush	Yellow leaves, beautiful purple berries hold till spring
Corylopsis pauciflora	Buttercup Winter Hazel	Lt. Yellow & awesome gold color
Cornus spaphiti	Var Red Twig Dogwood	White flower, red twigs, var. leaves white, pink & red
Hydrangea quercifolia	Oak Leaf Hydrangea	Lg. crinkled wonderful burgundy color
Spirea 'Neon flash'	Spirea	Bright green foliage turns to red, white & pink flowers
Viburnum 'Allegheny'	Viburnum	Leathery foliage, burgundy, holds to spring

**Our Top 5 Fall Color Perennial & Vine Picks**

Botanical	Common	Color & Bonuses
Iris "Caesar's Brother"	Caesar's brother Siberian Iris	Great yellow fall color, bright blue flowers
Rubeckia spp.	Many Blackeyed Susans	Yellow fall color, contrasting dark seed heads
Molinia variegata	Var. Moors Grass	Awesome golden color blazes in the setting sun
Parthenocissus henryana	Jap. Tricolor Ivy	Tricolor foliage reds & yellows
Vitus 'Rogers Red'	California Native Grape	Great reds & golds, huge leaves

It's best to choose your fall trees and plants while they are in color to achieve the variation and color palate that you are looking for. Remember to consider ultimate size when placing your new plant material. Consider distance from home and patios or walkways for trees so as not to develop root problems later on. Also bear in mind your existing plant material. Will the plants or trees being introduced crowd or hide your other garden favorites? Will they provide too much shade or require more water than surrounding plants? If you have specific questions about planting or placement for your new fall color, please feel free to email us at [gardenlights@comcast.net](mailto:gardenlights@comcast.net).




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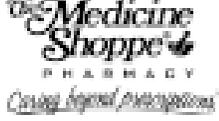
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