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WINTER SURPRISE

BY DAVID PAYNE

WE MAY THINK OF WINTER AS THE GARDEN'S DREARY SEASON, BUT THOSE OF US IN THE LANDSCAPE INDUSTRY KNOW THAT WINTER CAN BE ONE OF THE MOST SURPRISINGLY COLORFUL SEASONS OF THE YEAR.

How can you bring color into your yard in our North Carolina off-season? Here are a few ways to make your garden shine.

ADD COLOR THROUGH BERRIES

One of the most prolific ways to add cold-season color is through berries that grow on many native shrubs and trees. Consider **Winter Hawthorn**. Although it may lose its leaves in the fall, it gives way to reddish-burgundy or orange berries that grow on the branches in late fall and winter.

Or what about **Southern Magnolia**, an integral part of our Southern landscape? Known for its large decorative leaves and creamy white flowers, these trees reward us with another season of color and interest with bright red-orange, cone-shaped clusters of berries in late fall and winter. Another ornamental tree, **Dogwood**, is one that instantly brings to mind spring flowers, but it also produces scarlet clusters of red berries in late fall and winter.

Some of the showiest berry producers are **Hollies**. There are many different varieties from which to choose. Some require both male and female shrubs to produce fruit, but others do not. Lean on your local landscape advisor to tell you which will work in your yard. You may plant **Emily Bruner**, **American**, **Nellie R. Stevens**, **Robin**, or **Foster's** cultivars, all with red





berries that last throughout the winter. Or, for a touch of uniqueness, choose dwarf **Little Goblin Orange Winterberry** or **Winter Gold Winterberry**, two types of Holly that produce golden-orange berries.

ADD COLOR THROUGH FOLIAGE

I have two recommendations for beautiful winter leaves: **Firepower Nandina** and **BananAppeal Anise**. Firepower Nandina is a dwarf-sized shrub with leaves that turn bright red in the winter and stay that hue throughout cold weather. BananAppeal Anise is a compact tree or medium-sized shrub with evergreen foliage that turns golden yellow in the winter. Who doesn't need a touch of sunshine amid frigid temperatures?

ADD COLOR THROUGH FLOWERS

When we think of color in the garden, we traditionally think of flowers. There are a few perennials that do a good job of filling the air with both fragrance and color in winter. **Osmanthus**, or fragrant Tea Olive, is a small evergreen tree or large shrub with white flowers that bloom in the spring and fall and scattered blooming throughout the winter months. You can smell it before you see it, just like **Daphne**. A smaller shrub, its extremely fragrant white or purple flowers open in mid to late winter, a time when many other perennials are dormant.

Then there are the old standbys: **Camellia Japonica** and **Camellia Sasanqua**. Both display glossy green evergreen foliage and large pink, red, or white blooms in late winter, during our coldest temperatures.

Don't be fooled by the prevailing "wisdom" that winter is our dormant season. There are many plants that can give you optimal winter surprises in the yard with very little maintenance. ♦

"DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE PREVAILING 'WISDOM' THAT WINTER IS OUR DORMANT SEASON."

DAVID PAYNE is the owner of HOME & GARDEN LANDSCAPES and can be reached at 919-801-0211 or HOMEANDGARDENLANDSCAPES.COM.