

Fall is for planting these lesser-known shrubs

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Published September 17, 2016
Ohio State University Extension - Clark County

Fall is a great time for planting trees and shrubs and if you can find some of the following lesser-known plants at garden centers, get them!

These plants aren't really well-known by most homeowners but I guarantee you that avid gardeners have at least one of these in their landscape, if not all of them.

Heptacodium miconioides is an incredible tree that is just starting to bloom in the Bennett'scape. The common name of seven-son flower is given to this plant because of the seven tiny flowers in each whorl.

After the flowers are finished, the small, purplish-red fruits develop and are surrounded by the calyces that are a rosy color. These both last into the fall.

Heptacodium is a large shrub that gets around 15-20' tall when mature. It can also be pruned into a single stem tree.

Another great but smaller shrub for the fall landscape is *Fothergilla gardenia* or dwarf fothergilla. This dense compact deciduous shrub also provides wonderful white bottlebrush flowers in the spring.

The fall color of fothergilla is a brilliant orange to orange-red, making this a two season plant. If you go with the hybrid cultivar 'Mt. Airy' you add a summer feature of bluish-colored foliage.

A shrub that gives you spring blooms, great fall color and interesting winter bark is the oakleaf hydrangea. Everyone seems to like hydrangea blooms but the bark on this plant makes it an exceptional choice.

The exfoliating bark has a cinnamon color and is very attractive in the winter landscape.

Oakleaf hydrangea gets around 4-8' tall and about as wide. There are also more compact cultivars available.

One shrub that you may not find this fall but certainly look for next spring is the crape myrtle. Now wait, before you think I am crazy to recommend this plant, what do you call a plant that dies back to the ground in the spring? The answer is a perennial.

Therefore, instead of thinking of the crape myrtle as a hardy shrub, treat it as a perennial. Sure you won't have the outstanding bark that they get on the crape myrtles in the south, but in the right location, this plant will be in full bloom right now.

I saw a beautiful five foot crape myrtle with purple blooms in Columbus last week and I had to do a double take to see if it was indeed a crape myrtle.

So even if you can't find any this fall, put this on your spring garden center shopping list and plant it in a somewhat protected area of your perennial garden. If you get the right location, you won't be disappointed by the bloom.