



BRANCHING OUT

An Integrated Pest Management
NEWSLETTER
for Trees and Shrubs

Volume 32 No. 10 September 5, 2025

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Thank You to Our Scouts and Diagnosticians

Amy Albam, Carol Bradford, Dawn Dailey O'Brien, Don Gabel, Sandra Jensen, Hillary Jufer, Karen Klingenberg, Elizabeth Lamb, Jen Lerner, Jessica O'Callahan, Zaidee Powers, Alice Raimondo, Mina Vescera, Mike Voss, Sandra Vultaggio

Scouting Report Notations:

- (#) Numbers in regular type note plate(s) in *Insects that Feed on Trees and Shrubs* (2nd edition) by W.T. Johnson and H.H. Lyon.
- (#) Numbers in italics note plate(s) in *Diseases of Trees and Shrubs* (2nd edition) by W.A. Sinclair, H.H. Lyon, and W.T. Johnson.

Scouting Report

Conifers

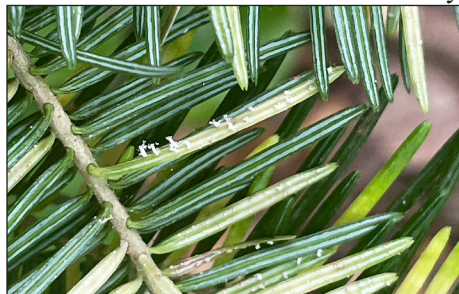
Douglas-fir Needle Midge (15C, D)—live larvae in kinked needles in Douglas-fir Christmas trees in Suffolk Co. At points of attack needles are often bent, usually very slightly swollen and pale in color. Other related species in Douglas-fir attack nearer the needle base or tip.



Douglas-fir needle midge damage (Dan Gilrein)

Eastern Spruce Gall Adelgid (50)—galls open in Rockland Co.

Fir-fern Rust (139)—seen Upstate on balsam & on fern in the Ithaca clinic recently.



Fir-fern rust (Dan Gilrein)

Fletcher Scale (42)—on yew in Westchester Co.

Rhizosphaera Needlecast (27)—on spruces in Westchester Co.

Broad-leaved Trees and Shrubs

Anthracnose (47, 54)—on maple and elm in Westchester Co.

Armillaria Root Rot (162-164)—on beech in Suffolk Co. Rhizomorphs seen at the base of a drought-stressed tree.



Rhizomorphs: signs of Armillaria root rot (John Mitchell)

Chilli Thrips—leaf damage to hydrangea in Westchester and Suffolk Co.

Fall Webworm (167)—webbed terminals in Westchester Co.

Hickory Phylloxera Leaf Galls—numerous on pignut hickory from *Phylloxera caryaesemen* in Suffolk Co. The small bead-like galls have openings beneath;

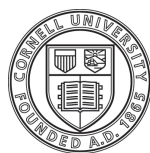
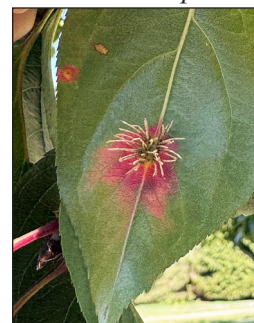


Hickory phylloxera galls (Dan Gilrein)

numerous 1st-instar nymphs had emerged and were wandering over the surface. Bitternut hickory is also a host. Hickories host many other other phylloxerans, which are aphid relatives that do not host-alternate as many aphids do; *P. caryaecaulis* (222), familiar to many on pignut and sometimes shagbark, creates odd petiole galls. See *Under the Scope* below.

Japanese Apple Rust—a sighting of what appears to be this *Gymnosporangium* rust on crabapple in Westchester Co.

Japanese apple rust (Hillary Jufer)



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

Laurel Wilt—on sassafras. This disease, new to NY, is caused by the invasive exotic fungus *Harringtonia lauricola* (previously *Raffaelea lauricola*). It has been confirmed in Northport, Suffolk Co. by PCR tests and sequencing done by APHIS and the University of Florida. Based on the fungus morphology in culture, infected trees have also been found in St. James, Hauppauge, Greenlawn and Dix Hills. This disease is vectored by the tiny *Xyleborus glabratus*, known as the redbay ambrosia beetle—this quarantine pest was found in NY for the first time this summer on trees with laurel wilt in Northport. Laurel wilt affects only members of the Lauraceae, which includes sassafras and spicebush, but NOT mountain laurel or cherry laurel. **Please report suspect cases to iMAP Invasives.** Chip trees and use mulch on site. More info at <https://tinyurl.com/4kzw46n5> and <https://tinyurl.com/bpautcu5>



From top: wilted sassafras from laurel wilt (Anton Angelich); black ring in cross-section (Margery Daughtrey); above left: the ambrosia beetle vector (Isabel Marez); right: black streaking seen in chisel wound (Mina Vescera)



Lilac Defoliation—reports across NY of lilacs with leaf drop. Samples show sporulation of two leaf spotting fungi, *Septoria* and *Pseudocercospora* spp., and some spider mites and powdery mildew as well. Unusual growth of multiple spindly shoots also noted in Dutchess Co., suggestive of phytoplasma infection.



Lilac defoliation on left of image (Anna DeCordova)

Oak Flake Gall Wasp—small, tan fuzzy galls from gall wasp *Neuroterus quercusverrucarum* under leaves of swamp white oak in Manhattan. Overcup, white and some other oaks are also hosts. Nice photos at Joe Boggs' page: <https://bygl.osu.edu/node/2035>

Pear Trellis Rust (129-133)—on Callery pear in Westchester Co.

Phyllosticta Leaf Spot (20)—on Freeman maple in Tompkins Co. Shown here along with two larger, blacker, lesions of tar spot.



Phyllosticta leaf spot and tar spot (Sandra Jensen)

Powdery Mildew (3-6)—affecting various plants: on *Platanus* in Westchester Co. and on American chestnut in Ulster Co. We don't see chestnut trees very often, but this year we can see powdery mildew on their leaves. Chestnut shares a common powdery mildew fungus with other members of the Fagaceae. On crape myrtle in Suffolk Co. some cultivars show incredible coatings of powdery mildew mycelium and spores.



Top: powdery mildew on *Platanus* (Hillary Jufer)



Above: powdery mildew on crape myrtle (Norma Taylor); right: on chestnut (Andrew Messinger)



"Spined Longhorned Beetle"—on hickory in Suffolk Co. Mating pair spotted on declining hickory.

Larvae feed under bark of dead/dying hickory; hackberry and persimmon are other reported hosts, occasionally pine, elm, pecan. Adults somewhat resemble redheaded ash borer (131D).



Mating spined longhorned beetles (Sam Caltagirone)

Spotted Oak Apple Galls—from gall wasp *Atrusca quercus-centricola* under leaves on post oak (only reported host) in Suffolk Co. Galls usually occur singly on leaves.

Spotted oak galls on white oak (Donna Moramarco)



Tar Spot (32)—on maples in Tompkins and Westchester Cos. In some areas leaves are shriveling up before the spots get the



Tar spot (above, Hillary Jufer) and dried out tar spot lesions (next page, Elizabeth Lamb).



thickened black lesions. Perhaps this was not a good year for tar spot!

Twospotted Spider Mite—on hornbeam in Westchester Co.

Verticillium Wilt (possible) (120-121)—on Japanese snowbell in Nassau Co. Dark streaking under bark of tree in the landscape might indicate either Verticillium or vascular streak dieback.



Possible verticillium wilt on *Styrax* (Donna Moramarco)

Walnut Caterpillar (67)—cast "skins" and webbing from aggregation on trunk of black walnut in Genesee Co.

Walnut caterpillar cast "skins" (Don Gabel)



Willow Oak Sawfly—

several on black oak in Suffolk Co. *Arge quidia* is not often in the Diagnostic Lab.



Willow oak sawfly (Kathy Wegman)

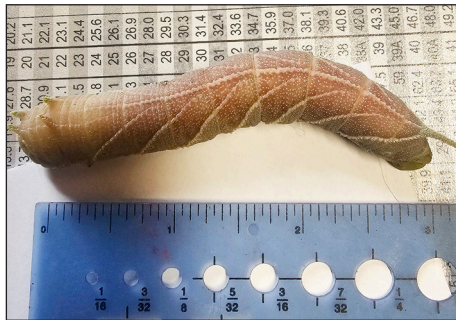
Under the Scope: Reports from Diagnostic Labs

Douglas-fir Needle Midge (15C,D)—close-up of needle damage and cut away to reveal midge larva feeding within.



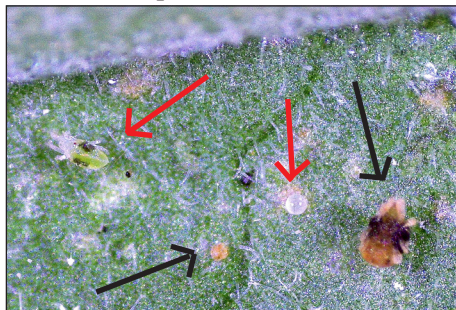
Douglas-fir needle cut open to show midge larva inside (Dan Gilrein)

Elm Sphinx Moth—aka called four-horned sphinx for the distinctive "horns" behind the head, they feed on basswood/ linden, birch and elm. In Suffolk Co. Sphinx caterpillars are often spectacular and can be quite large but rarely pests.



Elm sphinx moth caterpillar (Mike Sperber)

Horticultural Oil for Mites—How to tell horticultural oil spray is killing mites? Check results after a paraffinic oil was sprayed on twospotted spider mites a few days before. The photo shows a live (immature) twospotted spider mite upper left and a pale translucent and shiny healthy egg just right of center. A dead mite to the right is dark and shriveled, while a dead egg, center, is tan and shriveled. Eggs of southern red mite and spruce spider mite killed by oil, normally reddish, may appear half transparent with the egg contents dark red and collapsed to one side within.



TSSM after oil application. Healthy mite upper left and egg (translucent, pale) center (see red arrows); dead mite (right) and egg (center left) are brown and shriveled (see black arrows). (Dan Gilrein)

Phylloxera on Hickory—Noted top right, close-up of pignut hickory leaf underside shows nymphs emerged from galls wandering on surface and gall cut open to reveal eggs, nymphs and adult present within.



Top: phylloxera galls on top of leaf cut open to show eggs and nymphs within ; above: leaf underside with galls and emerging yellow nymphs (Dan Gilrein)

Tubakia on Sugar Maple?!—Something new showed up in the clinic from Dutchess Co. this week: what appears to be *Tubakia* leaf spot on maple—we ordinarily see this disease on oaks, and rarely on sweetgum.



Tubakia leaf spot on maple (Sandra Jensen)

Miscellany

Cornell Webinar on Laurel Wilt: September 10 from 1–3:30 pm. <https://tinyurl.com/4adjrd63>

Drought stress: Signs apparent around Suffolk Co.: dieback, yellowing/ dropping leaves, leaf edge burn, dieback.



Drought stress on Kousa dogwood (Dan Gilrein)

Branching Out
Plant Pathology and Plant-Microbe Biology
Cornell University
334 Plant Science Building
Ithaca, NY 14853

Time for Bacterial Leaf Scorch (*Xylella*) Sampling. The Cornell Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic <https://plantclinic.cornell.edu> is now accepting your samples. The bacteria are most easily detected in early fall.

CleanSweepNY Long Island and NYC Deadline Oct 17: FREE chemical disposal for certified applicators/technicians, farms/former farms, garden centers, schools, municipalities: pesticides, fertilizers, paints/stains, triple-rinsed HDPE containers. Long Island and NY City: October 28 (Riverhead), 29 (Melville), 30 (North Merrick), & 31 (Forest Park, Queens). More info: <https://tinyurl.com/mtw5u499>

Winter Online Workshops: Branching Out editors as well as Cornell Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic staff will be hosting another series of workshops. Dates and details will be announced in the coming weeks and we will advise via email. Stay tuned!

Renew now for Branching Out's 2026 season: As we close out this year, it's never too early to renew for next season and receive the early bird discounted rate of \$60. Renew online at: <https://branchingout.cornell.edu/subscribe/>

Phenology by County

Rockland: devil's walking stick

Suffolk: seven-sons flower, panicle hydrangea (full and late bloom), crape myrtle (mid- and late bloom)

Tompkins: Japanese knotweed; late bloom: hydrangea, crape myrtle

Westchester: seven-sons flower, crape myrtle, hydrangea, Japanese knotweed

Dan Gilrein, Karen Snover-Clift, Margery Daughtrey & Shari Romar, editors

Growing Degree Days

As of September 2, 2025

Station	GDD ₅₀	Station	GDD ₅₀
Albany.....	2457	Ithaca.....	1981
Binghamton.....	2027	New Brunswick,NJ	2922
Boston, MA.....	2518	Poughkeepsie.	2582
Bridgeport, CT	2715	Riverhead	2751
Buffalo.....	2316	Rochester.....	2279
Central Park	3060	Syracuse	2395
Farmingdale	2585	Watertown	2015
Hartford, CT.....	2577	Westchester	2686
		Worcester, MA	2202

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The Wonders of the Winter Landscape

Vincent A. Simeone, Director, Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park (All photos courtesy of the author.)

Winter is one of the most beautiful times of the year to appreciate the garden. Although the garden may appear to be resting, it can take on a life of its own in spectacular fashion from the ornamental attributes of exceptional, well-placed plants highlighted by exquisite winter sunlight. Against a canvas of snow and ice, the glowing light of winter accentuates the beauty of trees and shrubs. Interesting plant characteristics such as the flowers, fruit, growth habit and bark interest become most evident in winter. In addition, conifers and broadleaved evergreens seem to take command of the landscape with their attractive foliage and striking textures. Collectively, trees and shrubs with winter interest will transform the garden into a winter wonderland.

Below are a few of my favorite trees and shrubs to accentuate the winter landscape:

Bark Interest

Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*)—Like the name suggests, this plant features a striking, reddish-brown peeling bark that is a welcome addition to any winter garden. Trifoliate, dark green foliage turns crimson red and eventually drops to reveal the beautiful, papery bark. This elegant specimen plant can reach 20–30' high with a similar spread. Although a slow growing plant, it's well worth the wait and will give gardeners many years of joy as it graces the landscape. Adaptable but performs best in full sun or partial shade and well-drained acidic soils. Hardy from zones 5-8.



Paperbark Maple

Seven-Son Flower

(*Heptacodium miconioides*)—This extraordinary Asian species is one of the most delightful large shrubs for the gardener who wants to try something unique. Although considered a four-season plant, it is undoubtedly at its best in the autumn and winter seasons. After flowers fade, clusters of deep red calyces (appendages that surround the flower) are revealed in late summer and autumn. Smooth, flaking bark and strong, upright habit are appealing all



Seven-Son Flower

year and highlighted during the winter months. Best as a single specimen or in a small grouping, it can be trained as a small tree and will grow 12-15' tall. While adaptable, it performs best in moist well-drained soil and full sun. Hardy from zones 4-8.

Flowers

Fragrant Wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*)

This shrub offers fragrant, small, cup-shaped yellow flowers with deep red centers while most plants are still dormant. Flowers appear



Fragrant Wintersweet

between December-March depending on the winter temperatures. With a tall, upright habit, it can grow into a large shrub or even a small tree reaching 10-15'. Dark green, sharply pointed, rough textured leaves feel like sandpaper and can turn greenish yellow in the autumn. Relatively easy to grow, it will adapt to varying types of soil texture but ideally prefers moist, well-drained soil and full sun or partial shade. In northern climates shrubs should be sited in a protected area of the garden. Used as a small specimen or in groupings; it is especially useful when placed in an area of the garden where the delightful fragrance can be enjoyed. Hardy from zones 6-9.

Buttercup Winterhazel (*Corylopsis pauciflora*)

A fine-textured, spreading shrub suitable for the home landscape. Winterhazel offers a profuse show of yellow, fragrant flowers in late



Buttercup Winterhazel

winter or early spring persisting for several weeks. After flowering, small, textured green leaves emerge and turn yellow in the fall. This shrub is so dense it is difficult to see through, even in the winter. It thrives in moist, organic, acidic, well-drained soil and full sun or partial shade. Keep pruning to a minimum, as excessive pruning will compromise the exquisite growth habit. Poorly developed plants can be selectively pruned in early spring to encourage new growth. An excellent woodland shrub in masses or small groupings and also effective as a low screen or informal hedge. Provide ample room to spread as it will grow to 5' tall x 6-8' wide. Hardy from zones 6-8.

Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis* spp.)–

Members of the witch hazel family offer showy, unusual flowers with strap-like petals during the winter or early spring season. Although our North American native, *Hamamelis virginiana*, blooms in the autumn, the winter-blooming Asian species and hybrids are the most popular. On very cold days the flowers will curl up and nearly close to avoid damage from freezing temperatures. However, when the sun is at its strongest in the middle of the day, the warming effect will allow the flowers to pop open. In addition to showy flowers, some species and varieties will offer a pleasant fragrance. Witch hazel has dark green, textured leaves that change to golden yellow, orange and occasionally red in the fall.



Hybrid Witch Hazel flowers

Hybrid Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis* x *intermedia*) is the most popular of all the witch hazels. There are many garden varieties of this hybrid and flowers range from bright yellow to orange and ruby red. ‘Arnold Promise’



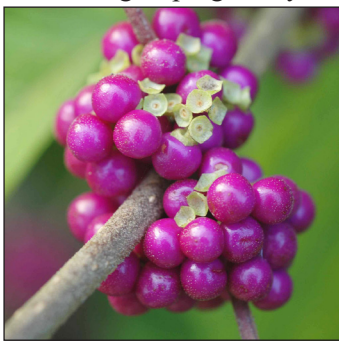
Witch Hazel ‘Arnold Promise’

is a very popular variety with large, bright yellow flowers with red centers and effective fall color. Best in moist, well-drained, rich, organic soil. Prune minimally so that the naturally graceful growth habit will not be spoiled. Effective as a specimen plant or in small groupings, they should be sited in the garden where there is plenty of room and they can be viewed from a window. Witch hazel can reach 10-15’ wide with an equal height. Hardy from zones 5-8.

Fruit

Common Beautyberry

(*Callicarpa dichotoma*)—A fast-growing, medium-sized shrub with an upright and arching growth habit that will reach 4’ in height with a similar spread. Pink flower clusters line up along each stem in summer and eventually develop into bunches of bright purple berries. In the Northeast this shrub is at its best around Thanksgiving when the leaves



Top: American Beautyberry fruit; above: Common Beautyberry ‘Albifructa’

have fallen to expose the beautiful fruit that typically remains on the plants into early winter until the birds devour them.

Suitable in small groupings, mass plantings, informal hedges, foundation plantings or as a single specimen. Common Beautyberry has a very graceful, cascading growth habit and is effective as an informal hedge or mass planting. Recommended cultivars include ‘Albifructa’, ‘Early Amethyst’ and ‘Issai.’ Hardy to zone 6. Our native American beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), is only recently becoming available in northern gardens thanks to some progressive-thinking growers. This vigorous shrub can reach 4-5’ tall and wide and offers pink flowers in late summer that develop into large clusters of deep, purple-magenta fruit in fall that persist until early winter and are an excellent source of food for pollinators and birds. A big, bold plant ideal for hot, dry exposed locations. Hardy to zone 7.

Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*)–

While evergreen hollies are far more popular, the fruit display on this deciduous species is often even more impressive



Winterberry Holly

than its evergreen counterpart, as the fruit is not hidden by leaves. During the winter the striking red fruit are attractive against a blue sky. Glossy, bright red fruit ripen in early fall and usually persist well into the winter months. They are especially luminous after a freshly fallen snow. The berries are also a valuable source of food for birds, which relish them as a tasty treat. ‘Harvest Red’, ‘Red Sprite’ and Winter Red® are all outstanding selections; ‘Winter Gold’ offers unique golden yellow fruit and sparkle in the winter landscape.

Winterberry presents a great opportunity for gardeners who are craving a unique look in the garden. Native from eastern Canada to the Midwest and Southeast US, it freely grows in swampy areas along streams and low-lying areas in the woodland, but it is also a terrific landscape plant thriving in moist, well-drained garden soil. Hardy from zones 3-9.

Winter is often associated with cold, dreary, inclement weather that many of us dread. But to the gardener, it also offers an opportunity—a time of reflection and appreciation for the wonders of the natural world around us. Not only does the bare winter landscape reveal the true essence of the garden, it also allows us to incorporate new plants that shine at a time that we normally wouldn’t expect them to. Landscaping with the winter season in mind gives us the chance to appreciate the incredible diversity plants have to offer us. A garden that excites us in winter is truly a great garden!



More trees and shrubs for the winter garden

Vincent A. Simeone, Director, Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park (All photos courtesy of the author.)

Striped or Snakebark Maple (*Acer pensylvanicum*)

—small to medium-sized trees offering green stems and trunks with prominent white stripes that contrast well against the smooth green bark for a stunning combination. Most suitable as understory trees beneath the shelter and shade of the taller forest canopy. Best in a partially shaded areas with dappled light and well-drained, organic and acidic soil. Favorite cultivars include ‘White Tigris’ and ‘Joe Witt.’ Hardy from zones 3-7.



Striped Maple ‘White Tigris’ bark

Japanese Clethra (*Clethra barbinervis*)

—size ranges from larger trees to many small to medium-sized trees and shrubs – all exhibit outstanding bark interest year-round. Close relative to the shrubby, native Summersweet Clethra but grows considerably taller. Smooth, exfoliating, multi-colored bark a standout in winter. Grows best in moist, organic, well-drained soil and full sun or partial shade. Prefers to be sheltered from intense wind and other harshly exposed conditions. Can reach 15-20’ in height making it suitable as a small specimen for a residential landscape. Hardy from zones 5-7.



Japanese Clethra bark

Redosier or Red-twig Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

—brilliant blood-red stems during the late autumn and winter months, with younger stems most vibrant. An ongoing pruning schedule will ensure a new crop of brightly colored stems each year. Several selections offer yellow or orangey red winter color such as ‘Flaviramea’, ‘Winter Flame’ and Arctic Fire®. These shrubby dogwoods prefer full sun and moist, well-drained soil for best performance. Plants can spread 10’+ and reach heights of 6’ or more but newer varieties can also be more compact. Hardy to zone 4.



Redosier Dogwood ‘Winter Flame’

Japanese Stewartia

(*Stewartia pseudocamellia*)—outstanding bark characteristics plus white blooms in summer and intense red or orange fall foliage color make this a magnificent four-season plant. Excellent choice for a residential garden with limited room, it will reach 20-30’ tall and half that in width. A pest-free plant that prefers full sun or partial shade and well-drained, acidic, moist soil. Although it needs some time to establish, this choice specimen tree is well worth the wait. Place in a highly visible area of the garden as a specimen tree for a woodland garden, lawn area or companion plant to rhododendrons, azaleas and other flowering shrubs. Hardy from zones 4-7 but needs protection in zone 4.



Japanese Stewartia bark

Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)—a prolific bloomer providing a display of delicate yellow, trumpet-



Winter Jasmine

shaped flowers in mid- to late winter along with mounded, cascading green stems that form a thick mat of growth reaching 4' tall and double the spread. Small, dark, glossy, green leaves in spring through fall. Carefree, low-growing shrub best in moist, well-drained soil and full sun or partial shade but adapts to poor, infertile soils and is drought tolerant. Effective in groupings, mass plantings or around the foundation of a house. Hardy in zones 6-10.

Pussy Willow (*Salix* spp.)—some species are known for their brightly colored stems in winter, and several others are admired for their soft, silky flowers in late winter. Pussy Willows have a shrubby habit and offer soft, fuzzy male flowers also called catkins. These felty textured flowers develop as the milder weather approaches hinting that spring is on its way. Fast growing and prefers very moist



Pussy Willow catkins

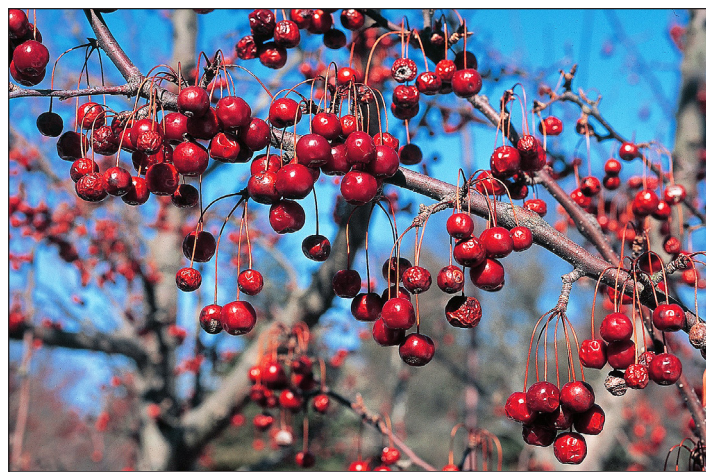
soils and full sun or partial shade. Place in areas of the garden where they will be well watered or near streams and ponds where water is plentiful. Several species available, but Goat Willow (*S. caprea*) and Black Pussy Willow (*S. melanostachys*) are two worthwhile garden shrubs that perform well in most landscape situations provided they have adequate moisture. Established plantings will also tolerate drier areas of the garden. Goat Willow will grow from zone 4 to 8 and Black Pussy Willow will grow from zones 4-7.

Dawn Viburnum (*Viburnum x bodnatense* 'Dawn')—sweet-smelling when in bloom and one of the earliest flowering viburnums with deep pink flower clusters. Upright growth habit and coarse branches make this plant a bold fixture in the landscape. Prune regularly to remove older stems and keep the attractive shape. Handsome, textured green leaves become deep bronzy red to maroon in fall. Excellent single specimen or small groupings, for informal hedges and as a backdrop to smaller plantings. Favorite other cultivars include 'Mohawk' and 'Eskimo'. Hardy from zones 5 to 7.

Dawn Viburnum flowers



Sugar Tyme Crabapple (*Malus x Sugar Tyme*®)—many species grown for white or pink flowers in spring, but dark brown, textured bark and artistic growth pattern of mature trees look spooky on cloudy, wintry days. Adaptable



Sugar Tyme® crabapple fruit

to many landscape situations; many older varieties are susceptible to various diseases, but recent research has yielded superb newer varieties that demonstrate improved disease resistance and superior ornamental characteristics like Sugar Tyme® with glossy, bright red fruit that ripen in autumn and often persist through the winter. Best in moist, well-drained soil and full sun but tolerant of wind, poor soils, pollution, and shade and temperature extremes. Prune in late spring or early summer. Hardy from zones 4-7.

Mahonia (*Mahonia* sp.)—bold, spiny and shrubby broadleaved evergreens with an upright, umbrella like growth habit and thick, leathery leaves and clusters of fragrant, bright yellow flowers for several weeks in late winter to early spring. Effective in small groupings or as a single specimen in a shady part of the garden. Leatherleaf Mahonia (*M. bealei*) has coarse, leathery, glossy leaves that can reach well over 1' long. Plants can grow 6-10' high but typically less in colder climates. Develops an open, upright growth pattern over time. Very adaptable tolerating a range of soils and light exposure. Best in zone 7 but will grow in zone 6 in a protected location in warmer areas



Mahonia

Editor's Note: see Vincent's feature "Thinking Outside the Box: Exceptional Evergreens to Create a Beautiful and Sustainable Landscape" in Issue 3.

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