Branching Out

An Integrated Pest Management Newsletter for Trees and Shrubs

Volume 33 No. 10 September 11, 2026

Contents...

Thank You to Our Scouts and Diagnosticians

Amy Albam, Carol Bradford, Dawn Dailey O'Brien, Don Gabel, Sandra Jensen, Hillary Jufer, Karen Klingenberger, Elizabeth Lamb, Jessica O'Callahan, Zaidee Powers, Alice Raimondo, Mina Vescera, Michael 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

Cypress Aphids (84 similar)—on 'Keteleeri' juniper in Suffolk Co. See https://tinyurl.com/Cinara-cupressi

Cypress aphids (Peter Boullianne)

Pitch Mass Borer (29)—several reports of heavy pitch flow on conifer trunks likely due to this clearwing moth. Several pines (eastern white, Austrian, Scots, jack) and spruces (white, red, Colorado blue) are hosts. There may be large pitch masses on trunks as well. Trees often tolerate attacks though the amount of pitch can be alarming. Zimmermann pine moth, fir coneworm and sapsucker damage are also sometimes associated with pitch flow on conifer trunks.

Norway spruce with signs of pitch mass borer attack & sapsucker damage (Carol Henry)

Broad-leaved Trees and Shrubs

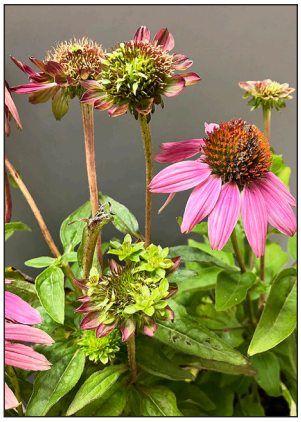
Ambrosia Beetle (117 similar)—on *Styrax* in Nassau Co. Species not confirmed but usually black stem borer (*X. germanus*) and/or granulate ambrosia beetle (*X. crassiusculus*). Flooding can increase risk of attacks; some hosts seem more prone than others. Orchard apple trees were a target of black stem borer around much of Upstate NY several years ago.

Ambrosia beetle "toothpicks" on Styrax *trunk (George LaMay)*

Andromeda Lace Bug (204A,B)—causing extensive stippling injury to andromeda in Suffolk Co. Plants had been relocated to site in full sun.

Andromeda lace bug damage (Cameron Christensen)

Aster Yellows—symptoms of phyllody (flower parts developing as leaf-like structures) and virescence (green flower heads) caused by the aster yellows phytoplasma (a type of bacterium) seen on echinaceas in Suffolk Co. Resemble green tufts in disc florets from rosette mite which was not present. Frass trails, often overlooked, from sunflower moth were also in disc florets.



Phyllody from aster yellows on echinacea (Margery Daughtrey)

Cornell University Cooperative Extension

Bacterial Leaf Scorch (*192-193*)—symptoms suggesting bacterial leaf scorch caused by the systemic xylem-limited bacterium, *Xylella fastidiosa*, have been reported on oaks from Nassau and Suffolk Cos. The disease is not common in NYS. ELISA testing in the PDDC to confirm BLS begins mid-September when the pathogen moves into leaf petioles. Late-summer scorch of the leaf perimeter sometimes bordered by a yellow or red line is typical. This oak and a recent maple sample with curious symptoms will be tested soon.

Possible bacterial leaf scorch (Donna Moramarco)

Box Tree Moth—first found in western NY in July 2021 the pest continues to appear new areas. A federal quarantine (https://tinyurl.com/BTM-OhioFedQtine) addressing interstate transport was added in early August in OH. In NJ, three counties are now included in the intra-state quarantine (https://tinyurl.com/BTM-NJ3). BTM info: https://tinyurl.com/NYSIPM-BoxTreeMoth.

Box tree moth caterpillars and damage (Hannah Nadel, USDA-APHIS)

Chilli Thrips—leaf scarring and distortion on bigleaf hydrangeas in Suffolk Co. landscape. This chilli thrips, unlike its southeast US variant, prefers bigleaf and panicle hydrangeas, ignoring roses and most other landscape plants. We have occasionally seen it damage other hosts (deciduous azalea, e.g.). Usually a late-season issue, flowers escape damage but we noted stunted flowers apparently due to chilli thrips on a reblooming (bigleaf) cultivar.

Chilli thrips on bigleaf hydrangea (Dan Gilrein)

Fall Webworm (75)—on black walnut in Tompkins Co., low levels noted in Fulton and Hamilton Co. Also active in Rockland Co.

Fall webworm (Elizabeth Lamb)

Jumping Bush Cricket—around SE NY this late-summer arboreal cricket is often responsible for spotty skeletonization of leaf upper surfaces of many deciduous and some evergreen (rhododendron, e.g.) woody as well as herbaceous plants, noted in Suffolk Co. You can often observe the culprit on leaves at night or find them hiding during day in folds of cloth loosely wrapped around branches.

Jumping bush cricket damage to bayberry (Dan Gilrein)

Laurel Wilt—sassafras trees are wilting once again in LI towns where the disease occurred in 2025. The vascular wilt is caused by *Harringtonia lauricola*, a fungus vectored by ambrosia beetles. Recent wilt sightings by DEC on Fire Island and in Prospect Park are being tested in Cornell labs—the range of the disease may have expanded this season. Black streaking of the outer sapwood is present in both locations. A single specimen of wilted spicebush collected by DEC was confirmed to have laurel wilt through culture at LIHREC and PCR at the PDDC. This is the first case in spicebush in NY. Some ambrosia beetle vectors were found in traps earlier this summer, apparently survived winter.

Left: wilting sassafras due to laurel wilt (Chris Kempton); right: twigs with streaking (Margery Daughtrey)

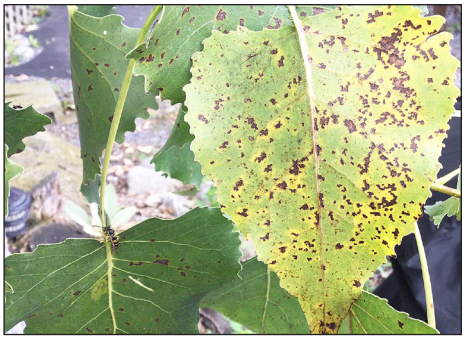
Leaf Spot on Linden—bacterial or fungal leaf spot observed with tiny vein-bounded lesions in Suffolk Co.

Leaf spot on linden (Michael Voss)

Maple Anthracnose (*54*)—reports of anthracnose on maple have come in from all over the state.

Maple anthracnose (Margery Daughtrey)

Marssonina Leafspot (*40*)—on cottonwood in Seneca Co.



Marssonina leaf spot (Elizabeth Lamb)

Massaria Disease—possible case of Massaria disease of London plane, caused by the fungus *Splanchnonema platani*, seen in Nassau Co. Cankers typically

Possible Massaria disease. Note red arrow showing canker location on limb upper side (Rich Gibney)

develop on the upper side of limbs, making them hard to scout for!

Oak leaf spot (Evelyn Manlove)

Oak Leaf Spot—on oak in Kings and Suffolk Cos. Perfectly round spots stand out. Keen observers in Kings Co. watched how the number of spots has increased over time since July. Specimens have not yet been examined; Tubakia leaf spot or an anthracnose are suspected. After jumping oak galls fall they also leave small brown spots on white oak leaves.

Oak Sawfly (57)—skeletonized upper surface of leaves on pin and scarlet oaks in Suffolk Co., the culprit long since gone. At least 7 sawflies feed on oaks.

Oak sawfly (John Mitchell)

Septoria Leaf Spot—Suffolk Co. lilacs with severe leaf spot and defoliation.

Septoria leaf spot on lilac (Sandra Jensen)

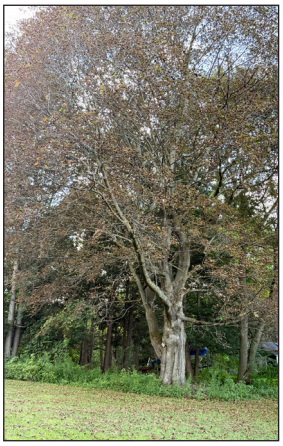
Smoketree Rust—seen in Kings Co. & Suffolk Co. this August. Caused by *Pileolaria cotini-coggygriae*, this looks very different from a *Gymnosporangium* rust and is easily missed.

Smoketree rust on upper leaf (left) and underside (right) (Margery Daughtrey)

Spotted Lanternfly—adults now present and common in some areas with established populations (Rockland, Queens, Suffolk Cos., etc.). Eggs will appear later this month. Report sightings in new areas only (outside SE NY) to NYS Dept of Agriculture. Report, learn more and see current distribution map: https://tinyurl.com/NY-IPM-SLF.

Adult spotted lanternfly with wings spread to show pattern (Dan Gilrein)

Tar Spot of Maple (*32*)—on maple in Madison and Seneca Cos. In Albany, Schenectady, and Saratoga Cos., the tar spot is often mixed with anthracnose, leading to increased browning.



Top: tar spot of maple on entire tree (Anne Dorrance); above: tar spot and anthracnose (Thomas George)

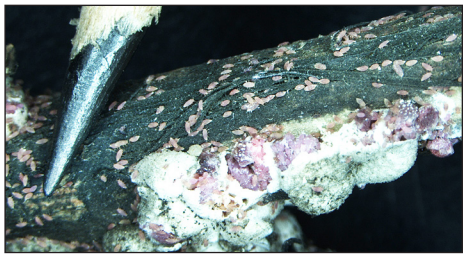
Tube-tailed Thrips—named for the long tube-like end abdominal segment, large numbers seen feeding on fungal material on a Japanese maple trunk in Manhattan (some thrips feed on fungi or spores). Nymphs are bright reddish, adults are black. We are awaiting taxonomist's ID.

Tube-tailed thrips feeding on fungus (River Lockhart)

Under the Scope:

Reports from Diagnostic Labs

Crapemyrtle Bark Scale—in Suffolk Co. and spreading rapidly around SE NY. Most or all cultivars are susceptible, leaving small, white cottony masses on twigs and dense black sooty mold on foliage from honeydew deposits. Samples had many settled crawlers 1st week of July, when treatment should be timed, 1100-1200 GDD in this case. We viewed 2nd generation samples 1st week September (2600 GDD);still mostly egg stage, many crawlers starting to emerge & settle.



Crapemyrtle bark scale crawlers & eggs (Dan Gilrein)

Miscellany

Beech Leaf Disease Webinar—Hear the recording of Dr Andrew Loyd of Bartlett Tree Experts' excellent presentation for Rainbow Ecoscience's series on August 21: https://tinyurl.com/RainbowWebinars

Elm Zigzag Sawfly—Though we've had no new reports this season new sightings continue in the upper Midwest and Southeast US. Current map: https://tinyurl.com/EZZS-7-31-26

Peony Measles—the fungus *Graphiopsis chlorocephala* found causing red "measles" on *Paeonia* 'Marchioness' in Onondaga Co.

Peony measles (Carol Bradford)

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

Final Issue & Editors' Note—With this, our final issue for 2026, we would like to sincerely thank our donors, subscribers and authors for their support of *Branching Out*, and especially our Editor Shari Romar who is retiring. Our most heartfelt thanks and appreciation for leading *Branching Out* the past 6 years and representing us, the newsletter and Cornell so wonderfully. From day one she impressed us with her excitement to work with us and readers sharing plant health news as well as her dedication to publishing 10 quality issues each year. Shari was also instrumental in the Branching Out and Diagnostic Skills Webinar Series…handling everything from planning, advertising, and registration, to follow-up. Shari also became a dear friend. Though we look forward to continuing *Branching Out*, we will miss working with her and wish her the best!

Watch for 2027 *Branching Out* renewal details soon!

Phenology by County

Rockland: devil's walking stick, sweet autumn clematis

Seneca: rose of Sharon, Japanese knotweed

Suffolk: seven-son flower, sweet pepperbush, sweet autumn clematis

Tompkins: hydrangea, rose of Sharon, Japanese knotweed

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

Growing Degree Days

As of September 9, 2026

Station	GDD_{50}	Station	GDD_{50}
Albany	2523	Ithaca	2064
Binghamton	2182	New Brunswick,NJ	3220
Boston, MA	2780	Poughkeepsie.	2689
Bridgeport, CT	2808	Riverhead	2836
Buffalo	2385	Rochester	2396
Central Park	3226	Syracuse	2521
Farmingdale	2844	Watertown	1967
Hartford, CT	2718	Westchester	2733
		Worcester, MA	2325

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- Michael Sperber / Nature's Guardian, Inc.
- Edward Wade / Wade Tree Care, Inc.
- Mount Pleasant Cemetery

The Autumn Garden: Select Trees and Shrubs With Late Season Appeal

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

Autumn is one of the best times to enjoy the garden. While it usually represents a time of harvest and putting the garden to rest, many landscapes are beaming with color including trees and shrubs with extended bloom periods, dazzling fruit displays, rich foliage color, and textures from multicolored bark. While I appreciate the spring and summer's unique appeal, the fall season is when the landscape shines its brightest. The selections trees and shrubs below offer admirable garden merit and are worthy of inclusion in the autumn landscape.

Abelia x *grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia) is a well-known flowering shrub best categorized as semi-evergreen in the Northeast. After a long, cold winter, this plant will dazzle you for the other three seasons of the year, peaking in autumn. Abelia is a workhorse offering small, glossy green, pointed leaves, a dense, arching or mounded habit and abundance of delicate, tubular, pale-pink flowers in summer. Depending on the species or variety chosen, it can grow as large as 6x8' or as small as 18x24". New varieties abound with different flower and foliage colors.

'Rose Creek' is by far the most popular cultivar with a low, mounded habit and bunches of small pink flowers all season. Another little-known species is *Abelia mosanensis* (Fragrant Abelia). This spring bloomer has pinkish white, spicy fragrant flowers, a cascading growth habit to 6'and dark green foliage that turns reddish orange to maroon is fall. It is reliably hardy to Zone 4 and is deer resistant.

Korean Abelia fall color

Abelia prefers moist, well-drained soil and will thrive in sun or shade but is remarkably adaptable to poor soils, drought, heat and is pest resistant. It can be pruned into a formal shape or left natural, and is ideal in a foundation planting, herbaceous border, hedge, or container. Blooming from June until the first hard frost in November, it is pollinator friendly. Hardy to Zone 6.

Callicarpa americana (American Beautyberry), is a native species that has recently become 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 and persist until early winter. An excellent source of food for pollinators and birds, this big, bold plant is ideal for hot, dry exposed locations in full sun or partial shade. Beautyberry is suitable in small groupings, mass plantings, informal hedges, foundation plantings or as a single specimen. Hardy to Zone 7.

American Beautyberry fruit

Aronia arbutifolia (Red Chokecherry) is a multi-stemmed shrub with several worthy features for the cultivated garden. Like many plants in the rose family, it has a profusion of beautiful white flower clusters in spring that give way to deep red, glossy fruit, which persist through fall and early winter. The fruit are not edible, and even birds will avoid them because of their sour taste. Shiny, dark green foliage turns a bright red or maroon in fall and

Chokecherry fruit

provides a nice backdrop to the fruit. Red chokecherry will grow 6-10' tall and 3-5' wide. Excellent in mass plantings, small groups, foundation plantings, shade gardens, and it can even be used near the seashore. I've also seen it perform well in the shade of a woodland garden as well as a highly exposed highway planting. Though durable and adaptable, it prefers well-drained, acidic soil and moderate moisture. However, it is also quite drought tolerant once established and will grow in hot, dry conditions. Full sun is best for maximum flower and fruit production, but partial shade is also acceptable. Hardy in Zones 4–9.

Aronia melanocarpa (Black Chokecherry) is a similar species but its fruit is a deep blackish purple. It is an excellent shrub for moist or poorly drained areas of the garden. Hardy to Zone 3.

Clethra barbinervis (Japanese Clethra) is a close relative to the shrubby, native Summersweet Clethra (*Clethra alnifolia*), but it grows considerably taller and offers four seasons of interest, especially in winter, with its smooth, multicolored bark in shades of gray, beige, and rich brown – a nice feature in the winter landscape. Japanese Clethra also offers spikes of white flowers in early summer that develop into golden brown, tassel-like fruit clusters that provide a beautiful contrast against the lush green leaves that turn red or maroon in autumn. Reaching 15-20' in height, it is suitable as a small specimen tree for a residential landscape, for instance in the front yard in a similar manner as dogwood, crabapple, or flowering cherry. Best in moist, organic, well-drained soil and full sun or partial shade, it prefers to be sheltered from intense wind, heat and other harsh conditions. Be patient: Japanese Clethra requires a few years to establish in the landscape, but once it does this small tree will provide unique beauty throughout the seasons. Hardy from Zones 5-7.

Japanese Clethra bark (left) and in fall (right)

Heptacodium miconioides (Seven-son Flower) is an extraordinary Asian species and one of the most delightful large shrubs for the gardener who wants to try something unique. Although this somewhat obscure species is considered a four-season plant, it is undoubtedly at its best in the autumn and winter seasons. Lush, green leaves cover the shrub in summer followed by small, creamy white flowers late in the season. After the flowers fade, clusters of deep red calyces are revealed for late summer to autumn interest. Smooth, flaking bark and strong, upright habit is appealing all year, particularly in winter. Best when used 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, Seven-son Flower performs best in moist well-drained soil and full sun. Hardy from Zones 4-8.

Seven-son Flower fruit

For years now, hardy camellias have been flooding the market and landscape - and for good reason. They offer spectacular flowers, glossy foliage and a dense, rounded habit. And while many hardy camellias flower in the spring, several species (*Camellia sasanqua* and *Camellia oleifera*) and cultivars also grace the fall landscape with their flowers. If you chose to grow hardy camellias outdoors, it must be in Zones 7A, 6B and 6A. However, *C. japonica* 'Korean Fire', a spring bloomer is rated for Zone 5B. For more details on hardy camellias, see my feature in *Branching Out*, Issue 1, 2024 at: https://tinyurl.com/49aywhct

Camellia 'October Magic'

The above trees and shrubs are just a sample of some of the exceptional ornamentals available to illuminate the landscape with vibrant colors in the fall. While we should always try to select plants that offer multiple seasons of interest, we must remember how magical autumn can be. Consider using some of these plants for their varied aesthetic attributes such as foliage color, fruit display, bark interest and even flowers in the fall landscape.

Feature Supplement: More Exceptional Fall Interest Plants...

Vincent A. Simeone, Director, Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park (all photos courtesy of the author except where noted)

Taxodium distichum (Bald Cypress) a deciduous conifer, offers soft, feathery chartreuse-green foliage that turns orange/ cinnamon-brown in the fall, with small purplish green cones browning as they mature. Bald Cypress can reach 50-70' tall with a tightly pyramidal and narrow habit and is an excellent choice in both commercial and residential sites as a street tree, in parking lots, parks or as a specimen in a home garden. Native to both northern and southern U.S. swamps and wetlands where it develops ground level woody protrusions called "knees" that help to stabilize in wet soils, it can grow well in drier, well drained, upland soils and knees do not develop. Aside from very minor twig blight, the trees experience few problems. Hardy in Zones 4-10.

Bald Cypress

Nyssa sylvatica (Black Gum or Tupelo) is a native deciduous tree offers toughness, adaptability, longevity, and stunning fall interest. Lustrous, dark-green foliage begins to turn brilliant shades of reddish maroon or orange beginning in September and peaking in October. In fall, female plants exhibit blackish-blue berries that attract birds. Slowly reaching a mature height of 40-60', tupelo has a picturesque, pyramidal growth habit at youth which becomes broad and rounded with age, and an interesting, blocky bark pattern. Though generally found growing near swampy coastline areas, tupelo readily adapts to a wide range of growing and soil conditions and is equally trouble-free. An excellent specimen in a lawn and in a woodland near the coast; small groupings of this species are very effective where room is abundant. Hardy in Zones 4-9.

Tupelo

Oxydendrum arboreum (Sourwood) is native to the southeastern U.S. up to Pennsylvania. It is one of the most ornamental native flowering trees available to gardeners who are willing to take the time to enjoy its unique beauty as a four-season tree. Sourwood displays lush, glossy, dark green leaves and fragrant, lily-of-the-valley-like flowers in summer, golden-yellow fruit clusters, and deep, reddish maroon foliage in fall, with deeply fissured rough bark developing in winter. Strongly pyramidal growth habit, reaching 20-30' tall. Sourwood prefers moist, organic, acidic, rich soil and partial shade but can grow well in full sun with adequate moisture. Sourwood is an excellent small specimen tree for a woodland garden, as a single specimen lawn tree, or mixed with rhododendrons, holly, dogwood and other acidic loving plants but gardeners must be patient with this slow grower. Hardy from Zones 5-9.

Sourwood

Fothergilla gardenii (Dwarf Fothergilla) is a handsome shrub native to the southeastern U.S. with a multistemmed, upright form and featuring white, fragrant, bottlebrush-like flower spikes in spring that last for several weeks and replaced by rounded, dark green, textured leaves that turn brilliant shades of yellow, orange, red, and maroon in autumn. While tolerant of sandy and heavy clay soils, plants thrive in moist, well-drained, acidic soils and flowers best in full sun, but partial shade is also acceptable. Plants grow to 3-5' tall with a similar spread and form a dense habit. While it seldom needs pruning, selective cuts to remove old, unproductive branches may be

Dwarf Fothergilla

beneficial, or lightly prune leggy shrubs after flowering for compact, dense growth. Excellent for mass plantings, small groupings, woodland gardens, foundation plantings, and also effective in perennial borders. Hardy from Zones 5-8 but may grow in Zones 4 and 9 with special siting.


Common Witch-hazel

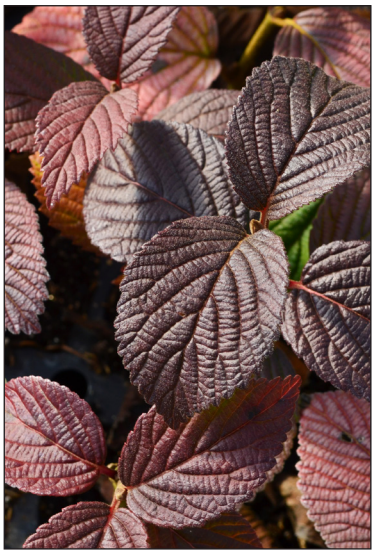
Hamamelis spp. (Witch-hazel) are some of the most beautiful and unusual flowering shrubs and trees in the world. Although winter-blooming Witch-hazels get a lot of attention, the North American native Common Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) blooms in the autumn. Small, curly, strap-like yellow flowers are a nice accent in the fall landscape but large rounded leaves provide the real show with stunning shades of pale to golden yellow. Witch-hazel is slow growing with a wide spreading, vase-shaped growth habit with the potential to reach 10-15' wide and up to twice that in height, so site the plant where there's plenty of room to grow. Keep pruning to a minimum to preserve their interesting, graceful growth habit. Plants prefer moist, well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. Use as specimen plants, in groupings, and in close proximity to a window or view from the house. Hardy from Zones 3-8.


Virginia Sweetspire

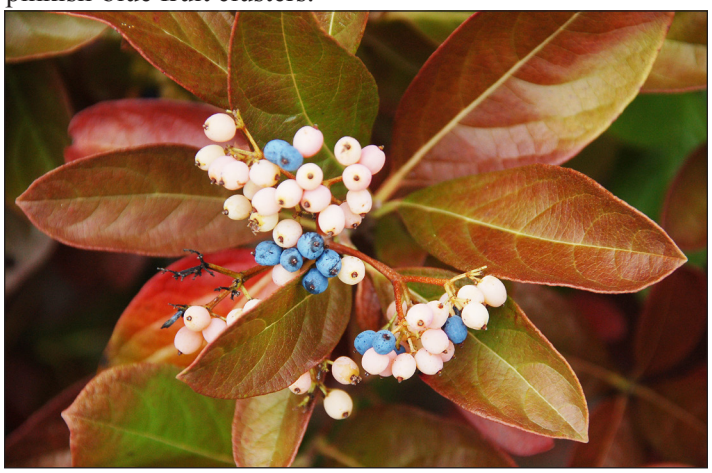
Itea virginica (Virginia Sweetspire) is a native to the East Coast and Midwest. This durable flowering shrub has many wonderful garden traits: long, fragrant, dangling, white flower clusters in late spring and early summer and dark green, smooth, glossy leaves with outstanding fall colors, and reddish twigs in winter. Sweetspire grows naturally in moist, swampy conditions, but it will also grow well in rich, well-drained garden soils, is quick to establish, and essentially trouble free. Full sun or partial shade is best for good flower production and fall color. Plants have a dense, cascading habit growing 3-5' tall and twice as wide. Useful in woodland settings, mass plantings, foundation plantings, informal hedges, and areas of the garden with poor drainage. Hardy from Zones 5-9.


Highbush Blueberry

Vaccinium corymbosum (Highbush Blueberry) offers an edible treat and is ideal for the landscape. Small urn-shaped white flowers in spring provide nectar for native insects. After the summer fruit ripen, the lush, green leaves turn shades of bright crimson red. The display is long lasting and usually very intense. Highbush Blueberry is not only great in a vegetable garden as an edible plant but can also work as an informal hedge, foundation planting or single specimen in a mixed border and reaches 6-8' tall and wide. Very adaptable, it grows in a wide variety of soil types and even poor drainage, tolerating occasional flooding. Full sun is ideal for the best fall foliage coloration, but partial shade is also acceptable. Hardy from Zones 5-8.



No fall landscape is complete without Viburnum. *V. plicatum* (Doublefile Viburnum) is an excellent selection for and tends to be more deer resistant than other viburnums. *Viburnum nudum* (Smooth Witherod Viburnum) is an excellent native with several exceptional cultivars. These selections display smooth, glossy foliage, dense low growth habit and creamy white flat-topped flowers in spring. In fall, the foliage changes to rich variations of red and maroon accented by pinkish-blue fruit clusters.


Top right: Doublefile Vibrunum (Michael Dirr); above: Smooth Witherod Viburnum

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