

## Great Shrubs for the Pacific Northwest

Shrubs are the backbone of all good gardens. Well-chosen shrubs provide many years of low-maintenance enjoyment, while poorly-chosen shrubs provide years of endless work. For those of us fortunate enough to garden in the Pacific Northwest, many plants fall within the 'great shrub' category. So many, in fact, it is often difficult to choose between them!

In an effort to help our readers determine what shrubs to plant, we've created the following list of recommended shrubs. Our selection criteria: hardy for USDA zones 7 and 8, good disease/pest resistance, requires little maintenance/pruning, not overly aggressive or invasive, attractive, compatible with our soil types, and provides year-round interest. As always, remember to plant these shrubs according to their cultural requirements (soil, water, sun/shade, mature size).

### Large Specimen Shrubs

These plants make great, stand-alone focal points.

#### *Callicarpa bodinieri* v. *giraldi* 'Profusion' (Beautyberry)

Deciduous, purple berries in winter, graceful arching branches, sun to part shade, 6-8 ft. tall x 6 ft. wide

#### *Chamaecyparis*

*obtusa* (Hinoki False Cypress)

Evergreen, many varieties, dwarf shrubs to trees, sun to part shade

*pisifera* 'Boulevard' (Boulevard Cypress)

Evergreen, silvery blue/green foliage, sun to part shade, slow growing to 8 ft. tall/wide

#### *Corylopsis pauciflora* (Buttercup Winter Hazel)

Deciduous, short chains of yellow flowers in late winter on bare branches, full sun to part shade, 4-6 ft. tall x 5-8 ft. wide

#### *Cotinus*

*coggygia* 'Royal Purple' (Purple Smoke Tree)

Deciduous, full sun, drought tolerant, dark purple leaves, 10-15 ft. tall/wide

'Grace' (Grace Smoke Tree)

Deciduous, full sun, drought tolerant, red leaves, good fall color, pink puffy flowers, 10-15 ft. tall/wide

*Elaeagnus pungens* 'Maculata' (Silverberry)

Evergreen leaves with yellow centers, drought tolerant, full sun to part shade, fast growing mounding shrub to 15 ft. tall/wide

*Enkianthus campanulatus* 'Red Bells' (Red Bells Enkianthus)

Deciduous, bell-shaped flowers in late spring, good fall color, great structure, sun to part shade, slow growing to 8 ft. tall/wide

*Fatsia japonica* (Japanese Aralia)

Evergreen, large tropical-looking leaves, shade, mounding multi-stemmed shrub, 5-8 ft. tall/wide

*Hamamelis* (Witch Hazel)

Deciduous, winter flowers on bare branches, excellent fall color, sun to part sun, vase-shaped shrub, 8-12 ft. tall/wide

*intermedia* 'Diane' – dark red/orange flowers, drought tolerant

*intermedia* 'Jelena' – coppery orange flowers

*intermedia* 'Pallida' – light yellow flowers

*intermedia* 'Winter Beauty' – fragrant, golden-yellow flowers

*mollis* (Chinese Witch Hazel) – most fragrant, golden-yellow flowers

*Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Snow Queen' (Oakleaf Hydrangea)

Deciduous, great fall color, elongated white flower clusters in summer fade to rose/pink, large oak-shaped leaves, sun to part shade, 5 ft. tall x 6 ft. wide

*Mahonia x media* 'Charity' (Charity Mahonia)

Evergreen, frond-like leaves, yellow winter flowers, summer fruit, part shade, 15 ft. tall x 12 ft. wide

*Myrica californica* (California Wax Myrtle)

Evergreen, great screening shrub, berry-like fruit, sun, can be sheared for hedge, 8-10 ft. tall/wide

*Physocarpus opulifolius* 'Diablo' (Purple Leaf Ninebark)

Deciduous, dark purple leaves, can be cut to ground in winter to control size, sun for best color, 9 ft. tall x 10 ft. wide

*Ribes sanguineum* (Flowering Currant)

Deciduous, native plant, spring flowering, fruiting, 5-10 ft. tall/wide

'King Edward VII' – pink/red flowers, drought tolerant once established

' White Icicle' – white flowers, drought tolerant once established

*Rosa glauca* (Blueleaf Rose)

Deciduous, grown for grey/green/purple foliage more than small pink flowers, scarlet rose hips in fall, sun, 6 ft. tall x 5 ft. wide

*Viburnum*

*bodnantense* 'Dawn' (Pink Dawn Viburnum)

Deciduous, fragrant pink flowers fall to spring on bare branches, vase-shaped shrub, sun, 8-10 ft. tall x 6-8 ft. wide

*plicatum tomentosum* 'Mariesii' (Marie Doublefile Viburnum)

Deciduous, white lace-cap spring flowers in horizontal layers, sun to part shade, 6-8 ft. tall x 8-10 ft. wide

*burkwoodii* (Burkwood Viburnum)

Deciduous, fragrant pink flowers early spring, dark green leaves with white undersides, good fall color, sun to part shade, several varieties, to 12 ft. tall x 8 ft. wide

## Smaller Shrubs

These shrubs are outstanding when planted in groups of three, five, or more. They are dependable backbone plants in any garden; plant both evergreen and deciduous varieties for year-round interest.

*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (Bearberry, Kinnikinnick)

Evergreen ground cover, many varieties, native plant, sun to part shade, 1 ft. tall to 15 ft. wide

*Berberis thunbergii* (Japanese Barberry)

Deciduous, thorn-covered branches, grown for foliage color, sun

'Aurea' – golden-yellow leaves, slow growing to 3 ft. tall/wide

'Crimson Pygmy' – red leaves, dwarf form, slow growing to 2 ft. tall/wide

'Rose Glow' – marbled red/bronze leaves, good in mass, 4-6 ft. tall/wide

*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Golden Mops' (Golden Mops False Cypress)

Evergreen, golden foliage, sun to part shade, low mounding shrub to 2 ft. tall/wide

*Fothergilla gardenii* (Dwarf Fothergilla)

Deciduous, white bottlebrush spring blooms, great fall colors, sun to part shade, medium-growing to 4-5 ft. tall/wide

*Ilex crenata* (Japanese Holly)

Evergreen, many varieties, looks like boxwood, drought tolerant, one of the best backbone garden shrubs, can be cut for formal hedges, sun to part shade, usually 4-10 ft. tall/wide, some dwarf varieties available

*Juniperus*

*conferta* (Shore Juniper)

Evergreen ground cover, low trailing branches, blue/green needles, sun to part shade, 1 ft. tall x 6-8 ft. wide

*squamata* 'Blue Star' (Blue Star Juniper)

Evergreen, mounding, silver blue foliage, sun to part shade, slow growing to 2-3 ft. tall x 3-4 ft. wide

*Kalmia latifolia* (Mountain Laurel)

Evergreen, spring flowers, many varieties, partial shade, slow growing to 6-8 ft. tall/wide (dwarf varieties to 3 ft.)

*Mahonia*

*aquifolium* (Oregon Grape)

Evergreen, native plant, spreads by roots, sun to shade, to 6 ft. tall/wide

*nervosa* (Longleaf Mahonia, Cascade Oregon Grape)

Evergreen, one of the best native shrubs, multi-leave stems, spreads by roots, yellow flowers, sun to shade, drought tolerant, 2 ft. tall x 4 ft. wide

*Osmanthus delavayi* (Delavay's Osmanthus)

Evergreen, graceful arching branches, fragrant white spring flowers, sun to part shade, rounded shrub to 10 ft. if not pruned, good hedge plant

*Picea abies* 'Nidiformis' (Bird's Nest Spruce)

Evergreen, dwarf type of Norway Spruce, mounding, sun to light shade, dense growth to 3-5 ft. tall x 4-6 ft. wide

*Pieris japonica* (Andromeda, Lily-of-the-valley Shrub)

Evergreen, many varieties, late winter flowers in drooping clusters, sun to part shade, average size 5-6 ft. tall/wide

*Rhododendron*

'Ken Janeck'

Evergreen, compact form, pink flowers, part shade, 3 ft. tall/wide

'The Hon. Jean Marie de Montague'

Evergreen, red flowers, dark green leaves, sun to part shade, 5 ft. tall/wide

'PJM'

Evergreen, root weevil resistant, purplish foliage, early pink flowers, part shade, 4 ft. tall/wide

'Snowbird' (azalea)

Deciduous, white/pink fragrant flowers, blue/green leaves, good fall color, part shade, 4 ft. tall/wide

#### *Sarcococca hookeriana humilis* (Dwarf Sweet Box)

Evergreen ground cover, shade, spreads slowly by underground runners, fragrant white flowers, 1 ft. tall x 3 ft. wide

#### *Thuja*

*occidentalis* 'Emerald Green' (Emerald Green Arborvitae)

Evergreen, pyramidal form, dense-growing shrub, sun, 10-15 ft tall x 3-4 ft. wide

*occidentalis* 'Rheingold' (Rheingold Arborvitae)

Evergreen, golden foliage, cone-shaped mound, sun, slow growing to 6 ft. tall/wide

#### *viburnum*

*davidii* (David's Viburnum)

Evergreen, leathery dark green oval leaves, spring flowers, fruiting, sun to part shade, compact mound to 4 ft. tall/wide

*tinus* 'Spring Bouquet' (Spring Bouquet Laurustinus)

Evergreen, blooms fall to spring, fruiting, good hedge plant, sun to part shade, 6 ft. tall/wide

Many of these shrubs are listed on the [Great Plant Picks](#) website. The 'Great Plant Picks' program was created to help Pacific Northwest gardeners identify outstanding plants; it is administered by the Elizabeth C. Miller Botanical Garden in Seattle, Washington. Visit this website for a complete list of trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, and bulbs; including photos and detailed plant information.

## Resources

Elizabeth C. Miller Botanical Gardens, Administrator. (2003 –last update). [Great Plant Picks](#). [February 18, 2003]

Kathleen Norris, ed. *Sunset Western Garden Book*, 7th ed., Menlo Park, CA: Sunset Publishing Corporation, 2001.

Barrick, William E., *American Horticultural Society 75 Great American Garden Plants*, Birmingham, Alabama: Oxmoor House, 1998.