

Brighten up Your Winter Landscape with Blooming Shrubs

Do you feel the temperature dropping? As the bright leaves of fall give way to the dull skies of winter, why not consider adding some cool weather blooming shrubs to your landscape? Cooler temperature does not mean that your landscape should be unattractive. Here are some plants that can spruce up your landscape and allow you to feel better about home.

Camellia Japonica

Probably the single most popular cool weather bloomers in the Atlanta area are Japonica camellias. They have long been prized for their large, waxy flowers that range from white to shades of pink and red in color and from 2 to 5 inches in diameter depending on the cultivar. All camellias prefer well-drained, acid soil and the japonica varieties, which are generally slow growers, do best in moderate shade.

Fatsia Japonica

Another beautiful evergreen choice that blooms in winter is fatsia Japonica. Tropical in appearance, it has very large, leathery palmate leaves. The dramatic white flowers that appear in clusters above the leaves in December attract many pollinating insects on warm days. As the flowers fade, they are followed by equally dramatic clusters of green berries.

Fatsias prefer rich, moist and acid soil and do best in shade. They have few insect and disease problems and can be pruned regularly if space is limited.

Daphe Odoro

If you are looking for a smaller shrub you may want to consider Daphne odoro or winter daphne; at maturity it reaches only 3 to 4 feet. The most important requirement of this plant is very well-drained soil; as a result, it should be planted slightly above grade, in raised beds or even in pots. Rosy purple buds on this evergreen open in late winter to pink blossoms that are extraordinarily fragrant. Many gardeners like to place daphnes near a pathway or entrance to enjoy their lemony scent.

Paper Bush

Paper Bush or Edgeworthia chrysantha, a deciduous shrub in the same family as Daphne odoro, is also planted for its fragrant flowers. They are a lovely shade of pale yellow and often last from February through April. A second attractive feature of this plant is its bark that is quite striking in the winter landscape.

Paper bush plants like moderate shade and moist soil that is high in organic matter. Be sure to mulch these plants well because they are not drought tolerant. At maturity they can reach 6 feet high and 6 feet wide.

Whatever your choice, planting a shrub that will bloom when skies turn gray and temperatures drop is sure to lift your spirits.

For more information on shrubs or any other topic contact UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at 321-697-3000.