

Shrubs Are Decorative, Functional

By BETTY FRANKEL
Special Writer

Shrubs are woody plants with many stems rising from the ground. The so-called deciduous shrubs are those that lose their leaves every winter and grow new ones in the spring. There are literally thousands of different kinds. Some are small and delicate or spread in a low ground-hugging mats. Others are tall and robust growing into thick twiggy mounds. And there are all sizes and shapes in between.

In nature and in the plantings around our homes trees dominate because of their height and the canopy they create overhead. However, shrubs cannot be overlooked. Forests have an undergrowth of shrubby thickets. Hillsides are clothed in their twiggy growth and marshes, ponds and lakes are ringed by a variety of shrubs. In our yards shrubs are building blocks which shape the outdoor spaces.

Many people think of shrubs only in terms of decorative beauty but they are among the most functional of plants. Although they have flowers that please us with their fragile beauty or bright hues, this beauty is fleeting.

On some shrubs the flowers last only a few days, and at best a few weeks of bloom is all that can be expected. The bonus offering of colorful autumn foliage is short-lived, too.

However, shrubs are there

Christmas Decorations Are Theme

The Michigan Horticultural Society presents the last two lectures in its fall series "How Does Your Garden Grow," on "Making Christmas Decorations." These lectures will be on Mondays, Oct. 30 and Nov. 6, at the J.L. Hudson downtown store in the 3rd floor sewing room, 12 noon to 1 p.m.

The first program, on Oct. 30, will concentrate on the making of outdoor decorations, while the second (Nov. 6) will be on indoor decorations. Emphasis will be placed on use of evergreen prunings in decorations for Christmas.

Speaker for the programs will be Edmund Boell, horticulturist with the Detroit Department of Parks and Recreation.

Free Booklet

Wood buffs who would like to identify the materials they're working with and who don't have the opportunity to study under an expert can now learn in their own homes.

A new publication entitled, "Identifying Wood," was recently published by Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service and is available to the public free of charge.

Get a free copy of "Identifying Wood" at your local county extension office or by writing for Extension Bulletin E-746 at the Bulletin Office, P.O. Box 231, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich. 48823.

as shapes in the landscape at all seasons. Shrubs can be grouped or arranged to create our outdoor living spaces as well as to decorate them.

IF YOU DESIRE a private outdoor world of your own, a refuge and a retreat, then you can enclose your backyard, or a part of it, with tall twiggy shrubs. Lilacs, forsythia, honeysuckle, mock orange, beauty bush, and viburnum, or other shrubs over six feet in height can do an effective job.

They won't need much care or maintenance and are much friendlier looking than a fence. Also, they do the best screening job at the season when this is needed most.

If you don't need total enclosure, but want to merely suggest a separation, shrubs can be grouped to create this impression.

At the same time, they can be placed to serve as a screen to hide a view you don't want to see, such as your neighbor's trash cans or compost pile. They can be used to block the

rays of the sun or of a poorly placed outdoor light, and create some needed shade. Also, they can be used to break the force of the wind and make a sheltered spot for outdoor relaxing or dining.

Medium sized shrubs, three to four feet in height, such as dwarf flowering quince, or deutzia, azaleas, and some caneberries and spiraea can be used to separate one area in the yard from another. They can separate the patio from the rest of the yard or screen the vegetable garden, or create an area where toddlers can play but are not hidden from view.

SHRUBS CAN be used to create pathways and to guide traffic. They can guide guests to a front entrance that is not very visible or otherwise clearly marked. They can form a pathway from the front drive through a side yard to the back patio. Also, a carefully placed group of shrubs can be used to keep neighborhood children from

wearing a path across a corner lot. Low-growing deciduous shrubs can be used as ground covers. Those that are suitable include several caneberries, dwarf forsythia, and dwarf honeysuckle, but the low evergreen shrubs are often a better choice as ground cover material.

In summer when they are clothed with leaves, shrubs show many shades and tints of green. The variations in leaf colors can be used to introduce subtle variety into the landscape, or can be planned so the various tones add almost as much color as would be provided by flowers.

Russian olive and Arctic Willow have silver gray leaves, and the leaves of some honeysuckles are a decidedly blue-green hue. There are variegated forms of weigela and red-stemmed dogwood with a white margin on each leaf and there are some

shrubs with yellow or pink edging light green leaves. Golden sycamore, golden-leaved Japanese honeysuckle and a few others have yellow or yellow-green leaves all summer.

JAPANESE maples, purple-leaf plum, red barberry, and smoke tree are among those that have red or purple tinged foliage.

The bright hued plants with red, purple or yellow leaves really stand out in the landscape against the subdued greens of the other plants. Because of this they make ideal accent plants. They are like an art object in your home or a piece of jewelry you wear. Treat them as something special to be featured and not as background material. They will never take a proper place in a border planting, but will stand out and focus attention on themselves.

Growing conditions should be considered when choosing shrubs. Shrubby dogwoods, fothergilla, honeysuckle and viburnums will endure considerable shade. Dogwoods, Michigan holly, elderberries, willows and several viburnums will grow in wet soil. Smoke bush, beauty bush, barberry, sumac and shrub roses will grow in dry, sandy soil. For acid soil choose azaleas, heaths, and heathers.

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