

December 19, 2018



Winter Gardening Interests
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Ah, winter, the time of year when gardeners reluctantly put away their trowels, clippers, and hoes and head inside. After all, there isn't much to see or do outside in the gardens.

If you are a bah-humbug gardener who wants only to have winter fly by so the joys of spring arrive as soon as possible then you are missing out on many interesting and fascinating garden. But if you are glass-half-full gardener then you know that winter gardens are what you make of them.

Admittedly, having a garden that has a lot of color and interest in winter takes thoughtful consideration and planning. But if you have done your homework, you don't have to look out your window onto brown, blah gardens.

If trees and shrubs are prominent in your garden, you could be seeing some fascinating colorful visions if you have some deciduous ones that are noteworthy for their bark, texture, shape, scent, or color.

Think of an *Acer griseum* (Paperbark Maple) which is striking in winter, with its peeling orange-cinnamon bark. Or what about *Betula nigra* (River birch)? The bark of it has spectacular cinnamon-colored peeling bark. Another tree with interesting bark is *Lagerstroemia hybrid* 'Natchez' (Crape Myrtle); it has gray exfoliating bark that peels back to see cinnamon under the layer.

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How about one of the most unusually shaped shrubs that shows off the gnarled, twisted branches only in winter? The *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' (Harry Lauder's Walking stick) is a somewhat ordinary green shrub in spring through fall but in winter it really comes into its glory. Other shrubs that are attractive and add to the garden during the spring through fall is *Cornus sericea* 'Cardinal' (Red-twig or Red-Osier dogwood). In winter, you can much more clearly see the twigs that give the shrub its name. It is especially spectacular in areas where snow is on the ground. One of my favorite shrubs for winter color and scent is *Sarcococca* species (Sweet Box). Many times I've been out shoveling snow and have been accompanied by the sweet fragrance from the Sweet Box shrubs I have planted. One of the nicest features of the Sweet Box is that the flowers are followed by small, white berries that provide food for foraging birds.

Trees and shrubs are not the only plants that help make a winter garden interesting. Texture, shape or color come into play with perennials also. Just a few of the perennials that maintain color in the winter are several *Cyclamen* species, multiple *Violas*, at least two *Helleborus*, and *Galanthus* (Snowdrop).

Another way to bring interest into your winter garden is by being a somewhat lazy fall gardener. Instead of diligently deadheading any and all perennials, leave the seed heads of plants such as *Echinacea* (Coneflower), *Achillea millifolium* (Yarrow), *Echinops ritro* (Globe Thistle), *Iris siberica* (Siberian Iris) and several *Rudbeckia* (Black-Eyed Susan). Some ornamental grasses also have interesting seed heads. Not only do the seed head plants provide interest in your winter garden, they also feed many of the birds that live in your area.

The examples in this article are just some samples; there are many more that space won't allow us to list. So, don't be sad that winter is upon us; instead rejoice at the many ways you can joy the view.

Happy Holidays!

On February 23rd we will be hosting a ***Sustainable Organic Gardening*** Workshop, at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park, 95682. ***Sustainable Organic Gardening*** will help you develop a backyard food source that's cost-effective, improves your family's nutrition and food security, and offers a healthy hobby for the whole family. Whether you have a patio container garden or a quarter acre to farm, you can grow an abundance of healthy, delicious food through sustainable organic gardening practices. There is a fee for this one-day workshop, lunch included, \$25.00. To learn more and to pre-register, please visit our website <http://ucanr.edu/sustainable-organic-gardening> or call (530)-621-5528.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center. The garden is open the second Saturday each month, 9:00 a.m. to noon, till April 2019. On January 12 we will be teaching about perennial vegetables in the

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Vegetable Garden and the Succulent garden will be open as well. There will be Master Gardener volunteers there to answer your questions.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.