

April 2008

## Plant Picks of the Month

### Allegheny spurge

*Pachysandra procumbens*

This native pachysandra earns fans as Marylanders grow more native plants. Five serrated leaves grow atop erect stems about 6–10 inches and slightly blue-green. As foliage matures, it develops a pleasing two-tone mottled effect. Clumps of white bottle brush flower heads appear in spring. As a ground cover, Allegheny spurge increases at a sedate pace, thick, and disease-free. You needn't worry about this native pachysandra overrunning its bounds the way Japanese pachysandra can. Plant in moist shade with organic soil. Allegheny spurge tolerates some summer drought. To tidy up in spring, gardeners may remove old semi-evergreen foliage.



### Buttercup Winter Hazel

*Corylopsis pauciflora*

Want an early-flowering yellow shrub but not a huge rangy forsythia? Try winter hazel. Its abundant bell-shaped blossoms create a dainty cloud of yellow on a refined shrub about 5 feet tall and wide. Other winter hazels extend your options. *Corylopsis sinensis* offers dangling racemes of fragrant blooms a foot or more long on a 15 foot tree. *Corylopsis spicata* is earlier, more fragrant, and tops out at about 6-8 feet. Plant winter hazel where a dark background highlights the lemony blooms. Winter hazel likes some shade and a moist soil, rich in organic matter, protected from wind.



## Lenten rose

*Helleborus orientalis*

Lenten rose blooms for an incredibly long time--late winter to May--with petals in smoky purple, speckled mauve, white, and pastel green. Even in summer, fading blooms continue to be attractive. More happily, deer snub the foliage and usually the flowers. Leathery leaves, heavily serrated, emerge bright green and turn dark green. Allow old foliage to decompose or remove it in late winter. Lenten rose self seeds or can be divided. This perennial flower can also serve as a groundcover. Plant in moist shade to part shade--a slope is ideal to look up at the nodding blooms.



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## Leaf lettuce, Black Seeded Simpson

*Lactuca sativa* var. Black Seeded Simpson

Black Seeded Simpson, one of many popular leaf lettuces, can be planted from March 15 to June 1 in central Maryland. For a long harvest of leaf lettuce, plant at ten to fourteen day intervals during cool weather. A lightly shaded spot can extend your crop into summer. Mulch helps cool soil. For the best lettuce keep soil moist. Insect and disease problems are rare on lettuce. Harvest as soon as leaves are big enough to eat. (For fall planting dates and planting dates of head lettuce, see our fact sheet, Planting Dates for Vegetable Crops in Central Maryland.)



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