



December 2010

Plants of the Month

Variegated Andromeda

Pieris japonica 'Variegata'

Looking for a shrub to lighten up a shady corner? Variegated andromeda can do it—and brighten drab winter days as well. This evergreen shrub grows slowly to as much as twelve feet high and eight feet in spread with a neat habit and stiff spreading branches. Leaves are arranged in distinctive rosettes. Its flowers are among the earliest in spring, appearing for two or three weeks March to April. The white to off-white blossoms spill over the green leaves in pendulous panicles. The flowers' urn shape suggests lily-of-the valley and, in fact, another name for andromeda is lily of the valley shrub. Unlike lily of the valley, though, these blooms are only slightly fragrant. Andromeda prefers moist, acid, well-drained soil and grows well in sun or shade. A location too hot and dry encourages lace bugs.



Peace Lily

Spathiphyllum wallisi

Peace lily, or flame plant, is one of the easiest houseplants to grow. It wants to be pot bound, doesn't want direct sunlight, and would rather be underwatered than overwatered. Its long shiny dark lance shaped leaves look good year round. The "lily" is actually a spike of tiny yellow blooms set off by a white spathe, which wraps around like a flame or sail. Soil should be kept evenly moist, allowing the top half inch to dry between waterings. Peace lily prefers high humidity but tolerates average household conditions. Supply medium light. Fertilize February through July with dilute fertilizer, being careful not to burn the sensitive roots. Organic fertilizer is a good idea. Salts from fertilizer or water softeners will cause leaf margins to brown, as will overwatering. Dust leaves occasionally to maintain their shine.



Nellie Stevens holly

Ilex x 'Nellie R. Stevens'

At 15 to 25 feet in height, Nellie Stevens is a holly hybrid that can be grown as an evergreen shrub or pyramidal small tree. One of its strengths is that it can be pruned severely without ill effect. Happily, its branches can be cut and enjoyed for holiday decorations. Leaves are lustrous and dark green with two or three teeth on each side of the leaf. The bright red berries often grow in sizeable clusters that makes them stand out all the better. Very vigorous and moderately fast growing, Nellie Stevens can be used as a specimen plant or in rows for a privacy hedge. It prefers high organic, low pH soils and has best berry set in full sun. That being said, it tolerates just about any growing conditions once established.



Grape Ivy, Oak Leaf

Cissus rhombifolia

This no fuss houseplant is actually a member of the grape family and is grown for its evergreen foliage. Medium to dark green glossy leaves are divided into three leaflets with coarsely toothed margins. Stems are covered in soft brown hairs. There are several cultivars but the oak leaf variety sports oak leaf like foliage with a fine texture. The growth habit is climbing/trailing and looks elegant in containers and hanging baskets. Prefers bright indirect light but avoid direct sun. Grows in normal room temperatures. Allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Fertilize an actively growing plant from early spring to fall. Pinch back the growing tips to produce dense foliage. Large plants can be cut back by a third in the early spring and stems tied to supports if needed. Trim sideshoots to about an inch long.



Do you have a plant or insect pest question? Call the Home and Garden Information Center 1-800-342-2507