

March 2008

Plant Picks of the Month

Osmanthus holly

Osmanthus heterophyllus 'Goshiki'

Most folks automatically assume an osmanthus is a holly, because of it has the classic glistening spiny leaves that make hollies so popular. But it's not. The word 'Goshiki' translates from Japanese as 'five colors' referring to this variety's distinct multi-colored foliage. Osmanthus should be planted in partial shade, is hardy to zone 6, and prefers moist, well-drained, acid soil. Not only is this a beautiful shrub, but it is deer resistant, not prone to disease or insects problems, and makes a great container plant. This variegated shrub is a must for the gardener looking for an easy care ornamental.



Italian arum

Arum italicum 'Marmoratum'

Italian arum turns the seasons topsy-turvy. Fall through winter, it sports high-gloss arrow-shaped foliage that is heavily veined or speckled with creamy white. After other plants leaf out in spring, a spathe rises up similar to a Jack-in-the-pulpit. For summer, the arum's leaves disappear and the spathe becomes a spike topped with a fat cluster of orangey-red berries. About 12-18" tall, arum clumps slowly increase in width. A good candidate for a winter garden, the bulbs can be divided in summer. Arum likes organic matter in its soil and moist light shade, but tolerates summer drought.



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Witch hazel 'Arnold Promise'
Hamamelis x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'

In gloomy February, Arnold Promise bursts into flower so sunny and gold it could be a tree forsythia. Growing into a 20 foot vase-shaped tree, its 1 ½ " blooms are fragrant and large for a witch hazel. Blooms fascinate with unusual twisted-streamers and stay for a long period. Fall leaf color also pleases with a soft orange not often found in the garden. Witch hazel prefers a moist site with rich organic soil in sun or part shade. While growth is slow, it is worth it for the low maintenance and winter wow-factor.



Sweet box
Sarcococca hookerana var. *humilis*

This groundcover shrub is prized for its dependable good looks and restraint. The thick foliage is a glossy dark green and tops out at about a foot tall. Sweetbox spreads slowly up to 30", making a solid edging or groundcover. Small white blooms open in late winter. They aren't showy but have a surprisingly rich honeysuckle-like perfume, hence the name. Sweetbox needs some shade. For quickest spread, plant sweetbox in a light, acidic soil with regular moisture, though it will tolerate some dry conditions in summer. Some spread by stolons is manageable and usually welcome.



Snowdrops
Galanthus elwesii, *G. nivalis*

When signs of spring are scarce, snowdrops are one of the earliest bulbs to give gardeners hope. The nodding crisp white flowers and bright green grassy leaves often peep through snow unfazed. Clumps of this Eurasian bulb increase in size for years and naturalize well. The variety *Galanthus elwesii*, known as Giant snowdrop, reaches 6 to 12 inches and blooms a little later than *G. nivalis*, which grows shorter with a smaller bloom. Plant snowdrop bulbs in fall. Divide in spring as soon as flowering is over. Snowdrops can also be grown from seed.

