

November 2008

Plants of the Month

Thalia

Thalia dealbata

The huge blue-green leaves of this native water plant turn to golden paddles in the fall, extending the enjoyment of your bog or water garden. Growing up to 6 feet, thalia provides great contrast to flat water lilies and skinny-leaved iris or cattails. In summer, a violet cluster of flowers blooms atop its wand-like stems which tower several more feet in the air. Thalia is hardy zones 5-11. A shallow water plant, it overwinters where fully submerged. Leaves fade to a pleasing tan in winter. Cut down and remove them by early spring. Thalia can be divided in spring.



Dwarf Fothergilla

Fothergilla gardenii

Nothing but pleasure rewards you for planting this native shrub. Fothergilla has virtually no diseases or pests. White spring flowers are short perky bottle-brushes, actually not comprised of petals but myriad stamens with a honeyed fragrance. Fall foliage in a palette of red, orange, and yellow shades dazzles the eye. Plant in part shade to full sun, in well drained loam. Avoid very high pH. Fothergilla grows about 2-4 feet, but where happiest reaches 6 feet. The occasional sucker can be used for propagation. 'Mt. Airy' is a choice variety, known for blue-green foliage, upright foliage, and reliable fall color.



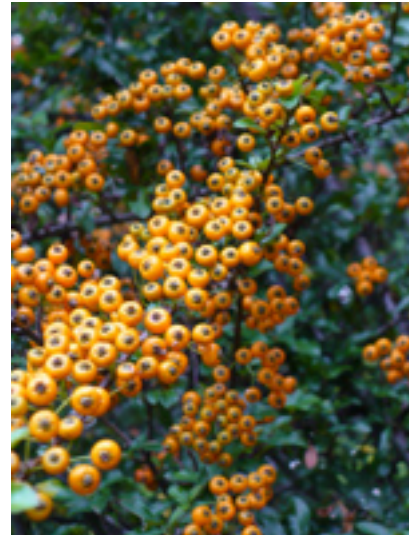
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Firethorn 'Teton'

Pyracantha x 'Teton'

Like thousands of tiny pumpkins, the brilliant orange berries of a pyracantha shrubs fit right in with Halloween and Thanksgiving decor. Height varies by variety. 'Teton', one of the new scab and fireblight resistant varieties, grows more upright to 12-15 feet, with berries slightly more yellow than the norm. Pyracantha's small oval leaves are evergreen or semi-evergreen. Its white flowers are small but so abundant they make a lovely spring show. Pyracanthas tolerate a wide range of soils, but do select a well-drained site. Full sun is best. Many pyracanthas prune nicely into an espalier form against fences or walls.



Sky Pencil Holly

Ilex crenata 'Sky Pencil'

With its skyward-reaching growth habit, Sky Pencil holly lends architectural interest to home entry ways or corners. Unlike many shrubs that outgrow their planting space in 5-10 years, this delightful slender evergreen stays in bounds. It is densely branched and has lustrous dark green, tiny leaves that are soft to the touch. Reaching a mature size of only 12-18" wide by 6-8' tall, at the National Arboretum this holly is planted successfully in large containers where it makes a formal appearance and can be under-planted with annuals and bulbs. It likes moist, well-drained, slightly acid soil in sun or shade.



Have a pest or gardening question?

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