



The World of Alternative Shrubs

By Garry Menendez, University of Tennessee

The dilemma that faces us every planting season, when it comes to landscaping, is this: Do we venture to install some unique plants and run the risk of having them die before we can really appreciate them? Or do we stick to the tried and true, status quo, rubber stamp look that will “conform” to the neighborhood? With so many plants on the market, I think we owe it to ourselves to be adventurous. This doesn’t necessarily mean making the trip to Cherokee and frittering away your hard-earned cash in the casino. I’m saying, “creep a little closer to the horticultural edge.” Stand apart from the crowd. Here are some plants that are definitely worth gracing most any yard.



The Trellis 1998

GARRY'S CHOICE ALTERNATIVE SHRUBS:*

DECIDUOUS

OAKLEAF HYDRANGEA good fall color, spring bloom

JAPANESE KERRIA small yellow spring bloom

DWARF FOTHERGILLA fragrant bottlebrush spring bloom, good fall color

BOTTLEBRUSH BUCKEYE large bottlebrush spring bloom, yellow fall color

NORTHERN BAYBERRY (semi-evergreen) spicy fragrance

ANTHONY WATERER SPIRAEA late purple spring bloom

DECIDUOUS HOLLY lots of berries in early winter, wildlife magnet, needs male

VIRGINIA SWEETSPIRE compact, cascading white spring bloom, good fall color

EVERGREEN

OTTO LUYKEN LAUREL compact, durable evergreen, white spring bloom

DWARF OR REGULAR HINO-KI CYPRESS sculpted look, rich green color

BAY BREEZE INDIAN HAWTHORN spring bloom, compact, may freeze in sub-zero temperatures

CANADIAN CREEPER COTONEASTER low, winter berrying groundcover



PHOTOS: Garry Menendez

MOST ANY ORNAMENTAL GRASSES good, good, good....

* Check with books, garden centers for more cultural details (sun/shade, soil conditions, etc.)

Just remember that when it comes to any planting, the key is in the soil and bed preparation. Does “dig a \$20 hole for a \$10 plant” sound familiar? It’s very true. The proper planting conditions are every bit as important to the success of a plant as the amount of sun or shade it receives. If you can’t find these plants immediately, make it into a game or scavenger hunt. Some day when you least expect it, that elusive shrub will leap out at you and say, “I want to be in *your* yard.” ❁