



Information

Sheets

The Winter Garden

To have an interesting winter garden, that is not only beautiful but colourful too, then you must look for these elements.

TEXTURE, PLANT STRUCTURE, BARK, TWIG PATTERNS, COLOUR AND FLOWER.

Now texture can come in many forms;

- it may be the thick dark green needles of a yew tree
- it may be the soft pillowy effect of the Boulevard Cypress or one in the Cryptomeria family
- it may be the thick broad leaves of Laurel, Photinia or evergreen Magnolia
- it may be the tiny leaves of Boxwood, Japanese Holly or Boxleaf Honeysuckle
- soft fuzzy ground covers like Scotch or Irish moss, Corsican Mint, Creeping Thyme as well as other Thymes
- it can also be the big craggy rock in the garden that is covered in moss and algae

There are many plants that will add texture and colour to the garden that are in the form of evergreen plants but don't forget the deciduous trees and shrubs as well. The bare bark of deciduous trees can add not only texture but colour as well. Smaller deciduous shrubs will make delicate, lacey patterns with their twigs. Here is a list of some trees and shrubs and their feature that makes them interesting for winter gardens.

Trees:

- Flowering Cherry has beautiful brown bark that gleams like silk.

- Paperbark Maple has striking brown bark that peels.
- Paperbark Birch with its gleaming white bark stands out in any garden.
- Dogwoods have deeply checked textured bark.
- Mature Chinese Elms have bark that resembles jigsaw puzzles.
- The *Betula nigra* have beautiful bark that peels with paper thin curls that are in hues of pale flesh tones to rich cinnamon brown.
- The Amur Cherrys bark is almost metallic with its rich, dark mahogany brown colour.
- Liquidamber tree bark is like that of an alligator; thick ridges that protrude make it very interesting.
- London Plane trees have bark that reminds me of camouflage clothing.
- Weeping Birch trees with their bare branches hanging like a lace skirt look even fancier with a touch of frost on them.
- Corkscrew Willow provides an 'elegant contortion' of curly greenish-yellow shoots.
- Japanese Maple, that has been pruned to encourage good branching, makes very lace patterns.

Shrubs:

- Red Twig Dogwoods with their bright red twigs add good colour to the garden.
- Yellow Twig Dogwoods are just as showy with their yellow twigs.
- Winged Burning Bush has bark that is winged making it so that it is almost triangular in shape and has the look very much like snake skin.
- The gnarly growth of the Climbing Hydrangea is very attractive in the winter especially against a red brick wall or chimney.
- Harry Lauders walking stick is always a great winter focal point in any garden with its contorted, curling bare branches that reach for the sky above.

There are also a few flowering shrubs, perennials, grasses and bulbs that will add flower colour to the winter garden. By adding these through out the garden you will be sure to have some colour and texture in every area of your garden.

Flowering Shrubs:

- **Witch Hazel** with its spidery orange or yellow flowers on the bare branches sparkle in the winter garden.
- **Buddlea** flowers remain on the bush long into the fall and then the old flower stalks on the bare branches look like winter lilacs.
- **Hydrangea** flowers hang on for a very long time slowly aging to the colour of old lace and then becoming transparent and very fragile.

Perennials:

- **Autumn Joy Sedum** have flower seed heads that remain on the plant and give winter interest.
- **The White Coneflower** has prickly, rusty-dark seed cones.
- **Heuchera** in the many purple forms add good contrast to the grays and greens in the garden.
- **Helleborus nigra** bears snowy-white to dusty-pink flowers during the Christmas season, hence called the 'Christmas Rose'.

Grasses:

Many of the grasses carry their seed heads over the winter making interesting forms and textures in the winter garden. The feather-white plumes of the Pampas Grass glistens in the winter sun. Many of the ornamental grasses add warm earth tones to the gray winter garden.

Bulbs:

- **Crocus** bulbs pop their heads up early in the new year letting us know that spring is to follow.
- **Snowdrops** with their bright white nodding heads look fresh in the winter garden.
- **Plant a mass of Winter Eranthis** for a blanket of starry yellow flowers in the winter.

Then, looking at plants, consider each one individual not only for their overall shape and size, but other characteristics, such as vein, colour, texture and pattern or branch structure. The beauty of a winter garden may be found in the naked silhouette of a tree or shrub with the winter sun casting shadows onto the garden or perhaps a wall.

