

For Tree Tips column on March 27, 1998
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TREES WITH UNIQUE QUALITIES FOR THE WINTER LANDSCAPE

There are numerous trees that have unique and special appeal to offer a landscape during the cold, gray days of winter. The most common thought of trees for a winter landscape are the evergreens. If you want to have green color in your backyard in the winter then incorporate pines, Douglas fir, yews or spruces. If you want a color other than a deep green, then a true “blue” Colorado blue spruce, varieties of junipers or a concolor fir that gives more of a blue-green color could be added.

Other than the evergreens that add color in the winter with their “leaves” (needles), there are a good selection for deciduous trees that offer different contrasts in the winter when the leaves are off the trees. For **unique bark colors**, consider the river birch with a salmon-pink colored bark that flakes off as the tree gets older or the sycamore that has white branches and gray with white “patches” of bark on the trunk of older trees. Other plants with good bark colors for contrast against snowy backdrops include the red-stem and yellow-stem dogwoods; Scotch pine that as the tree gets older, the upper branches have a good orange-red bark; aspens with a green-white color phase; and the weeping willow with the bright yellow-gold twigs.

Trees with **distinct shapes** that add a special difference to a winter landscape include the Kentucky coffee tree that has very stout, strong twigs that make a beautiful contrast against a gray and cloudy winter sky; the bur oak that has the strong, right-angled branches and wide shape; the before-mentioned weeping willow; and the eastern white pine with the “soft” needles and graceful branches.

In addition, there are trees that add beauty and contrast in the winter with **the fruit/seeds** that are retained on the tree. Some of the more noticeable of these trees include the catalpa with the long “cigar-shaped” seed pods that stay on the tree; the Kentucky coffee tree that has the thick/fat bean pods up in the upper top of the tree; crabapple and hawthorn varieties that retain the marble-sized fruit for winter foraging wildlife; and the Norway spruce that has the “banana” shaped cones hanging out at the end of the branches.

Consider adding one or more of these mentioned specimens in appropriate locations in your back yard to enjoy their unique and special addition to the winter landscape. Many times they can be used as the main focal point for an area with supporting material around them. They can help make an interesting view-scape during a time of year does give us limitations for plant contrasts.