

“Three Fs of Winter”
Marcia Schwendiman
1-12-2011

Fruit, flowers, and fragrance in dead of winter are possibilities brought to us by a nearly Mediterranean climate. If you want to enjoy this sort of display, guaranteed to brighten the dullest grey day, the following species beg to join your garden collection.

For fruit, consider *Cotoneaster*. Evergreen *C. lacteus* displays clusters of hanging red berries on graceful arched branches. Reaching 8 by 10 feet or larger, be mindful that it needs space to show its natural form. Ground-hugging *C. procumbens* falls like shiny green water in a rock garden. With tiny oval leaves, bright ¼ inch berries, and only 4 inches high, it spreads up to 6 feet. *Rosa rugosa* bears the common name Sea Tomato for bright orange hips an inch or more in diameter that decorate bare branches all winter. *Rosa nutkana*, a northwest native, also bears bright red hips.

For fragrance, *Sarcococca ruscifolia* or *S. confusa* each form a lovely informal 4 foot evergreen hedge. Insignificant white flowers perfume the air with vanilla in late winter. Red or black berries and shiny elliptical leaves make this plant a year-round winner. *Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Arnold Promise’ is an especially garden-worthy witch hazel. Enjoy spicy scent in addition to vivid yellow blossoms with this lovely vase shaped woody perennial.

For flowers, Camellias truly deliver. Try *C. japonica* ‘C.M. Wilson’, long grown for its pink, anemone form flowers; or *C. sasanqua* ‘Apple Blossom’ with single white tinged pink blossoms. Some years blossoms suffer damage from rain and frost, so give Camellias shelter if you can. At the front of the border, *Hellebores* with flowers ranging from white to deepest purple delight in late winter and lend a tropical look with their large palmate leaves. Finally, hearty *Cyclamen* in white and pink above a basal cluster of extremely attractive variegated leaves grow well even in dry shade.

All species suggested are hearty, drought tolerant, many with numerous cultivars to select from. Placed near a walkway or within view through a window they deliver pleasure even when we choose not to be outside gardening. For an eye-ful of winter landscape possibilities, visit Washington Park Arboretum’s winter garden. Check the web site OSU LANDSCAPE PLANTS for excellent photos of many species listed above. <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/index.htm>.
