

Winter Grandeur

Many times we forget the splendor of Michigan's four seasons. In fact many of our landscapes are routinely developed for the spring and summer months. When we garden we have to remember that we are alive for four seasons and our landscapes should reflect beauty in each of those seasons.

The easiest way to create interest in the winter is to plant a few evergreen yews and call it good. In fact look at most the landscapes and you will find that the majority of people had that same yew fetish that you thought was unique.

Winter landscapes can come alive by adding plants that hang on to their fruit in the winter. The hollies are often the first to come to mind for their winter fruit display. Other plants with winter fruit display are crabapples, viburnums, chokeberries, and dogwoods. Think even harder and many perennials and ferns have dried fruit displays that are attractive in the winter months.

Another component of plants that create attention in the winter is the bark characteristic. We all know how the white birch is loved because of its beautiful bark. I have even seen it planted in hot, dry soil that causes bronze birch bore to attack the tree before the last shovel of soil is put in the hole. There are other trees, beside the white birch, and shrubs with lovely bark. Cherry, dogwood, maple, and beech trees all have excellent bark characteristics to admire during the winter.

I feel we are lucky to live in an area of the world that has four distinct seasons. Each of the seasons comes with their own beauty and interest. Winter is often long and tough to appreciate the beauty of our landscapes. We just need to open our eyes and see the tranquil nature of winter.

Winter is also a time of anticipation for us gardeners. This is a time that we are able to finally read all those magazines we purchased because of the attractive pictures that made us drool. This time of anticipation is encouraged by the stacks of seed and plant catalogs that arrive daily in the mail. (Do pumpkins really get that big?)

Gardeners never rest in the winter. They are too busy thinking about how their gardens will be better than ever next year. Instead of weeding they are reading. Instead of planting they are pondering. Instead of mowing they are snoring.

If you have time this winter from all your dreaming, take time to visit me at Dow Gardens. I am the one all bundle up nurturing the plants and dreaming about next year. If I don't see you in the gardens, you will be glad you visited the gardens with all its beauty and winter charm.