



The Bloomin' News



Sandhills Community College

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Winter 2017

*The Sandhills Horticultural Society - dedicated to the support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens since 1987.
Please help the Gardens grow by becoming a Society member.*

Attracting Birds to your Garden

Johanna Westmen



Many of you are aware of my keen interest in gardening, but you may not be aware that I am also an avid birder. Some of my most enjoyable moments in my garden involve sitting on the front porch in the morning with a cup of coffee and my binoculars. I believe my love of birding comes from my general love of all nature and keen interest in learning. We probably can all agree that learning on a daily basis, no matter the subject, can be the secret to a long and happy life.

Over the years I have learned what attracts birds to the garden. My most recent revelation came from attending the Ornamental and Turf Conference in Carthage last February where a speaker spoke on this very subject. After listening to his talk, Jim and I have changed the way we look at the back half of our property in Pinehurst. This informative speaker spoke of the importance of having oak tree species in your landscape and how vital they were to the bird population. It seems that the majority of caterpillars most birds feed their young feed on varying species of oaks. We had intended to remove all the scraggly water oaks on the back of our property but have now changed our mind to encourage the already remarkable bird population we are seeing. Now I am not encouraging anyone to plant water oaks, but realizing their important in attracting birds will help you view them more favorably!

The other plant species that is very important is, of course, hollies. We have many native *Ilex opaca* here in the Sandhills and as long as they are females we know they will produce fruit. There are some particular cultivars such as Savannah Holly, which are abundant fruit producers and definitely deserve a place in your garden as a food source. I have seen

flocks of Cedar Wax Wings and American Robin flying in and out of the Nellie R. Stevens Holly in the gardens as well. In addition, Dogwoods and Southern Magnolia are also a wonderful food source for birds. I have watched a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers for the last five years come to the rather large magnolia we have on Juniper Lake Road and feast on the seeds produced on these follicles. There are several herbaceous species of plants such as the black eyed susan which are very important to species such as American Goldfinch. By leaving the seed heads on the plant after they bloom, they will attract many goldfinch to your garden.

Other plants, such as serviceberries, eastern red cedar, mulberries, crabapples, wild grape and Virginia creeper are other valuable food sources for the many species of birds we have in the Sandhills. Also, don't forget that many of these plants also provide nests sites and cover for many species of birds. Nesting sites and cover are just as critical as food when it comes to attracting birds. This was the first year we have put up bluebird boxes and I must say they did not disappoint. I have witnessed two broods of bluebirds this year and am looking forward to more next year. Last, but definitely not least, please be sure to include water in your gardens. We have several birdbaths and it is amazing how much time birds spend there. This spring when the robins were moving through the neighborhood, I counted thirteen moving in and off one birdbath. We make sure that there are several options. We have at least five in our garden alone. Regardless of how many you have, make sure to keep the water clean and fresh.

Making your garden a bird friendly habitat can be as rewarding as watching the plants in your garden flourish. Spend some time reevaluating your garden and simply add plants for food and provide water for the birds. The time spent in your garden will become even more enjoyable.

Witch Hazel

One of Winter's Fragrant Flowering Shrubs

Dolores Muller

The name witch hazel brings back memories of when I was young and my grandmother would apply her magic remedy to my bug bites and scratches. A most pleasant smelling liquid called witch hazel. The astringent lotion is made from the bark and leaves of the witch hazel shrub, *Hamamelis virginiana*, and was widely used for medicinal purposes by Native Americans. The American variety blooms in the fall from September to December and its flowers have more fragrance than the Chinese variety, *Hamamelis mollis* which blooms January through March. *Hamamelis*, means "together with fruit", referring to the simultaneous occurrence of flowers with the maturing fruit from the previous year.

While summer is the season most thought of for fabulous-smelling flowers, winter is the season for the sweet, delicate-scented flowers of witch hazels and they are among my favorite plants. Its red, orange, or yellow flowers provide a sweet scent in the winter when their ribbon-like petals unfurl to form spidery flowers smelling of warm spice with a hint of citrus that survive the bitterest winter weather. Despite their wispy, twisted appearance, the flowers are remarkably durable. This deciduous shrub or small tree is widely grown as an ornamental and is gaining in popularity for the home landscape.

The American witch hazel was used to make dowsing or divining rods. Early European settlers observed Native Americans using witch hazel to find underground sources of water because the dowsing end of the forked branch would bend when underground water was detected. This practice was widely used by American settlers and then exported back to Europe. Dowsing became an established feature of well-digging into the 20th century.

Witch hazel is adaptable to the home landscape as a small tree or large shrub growing to 15 - 25 feet and does well in zones 3-8. It prefers a well-drained, loamy, acidic soil and requires regular watering when established. If planted in the full sunlight it may suffer, occurring in nature as an understory plant. Flowering does not start until the plants are at least six years old. It is hardy, maintenance-free, and ignored by most pests. And then there's the crowning glory: shaggy, spidery winter blooms with long, crinkly petals, clustered up and down the length of the branches and leaves that turn a beautiful golden/orange color in the fall.



Plants for Winter Interest

Jim Westmen



Japanese Maple 'Bihou'

When choosing plants for my garden I always think of their year round interest possibilities. There are endless choices that usually provide interest from spring through the end of summer and even into the fall. We can however be starved for something stunning through the winter unless we planned for this season as well. Choosing plants that will offer excitement for this cold season should be the same as choices for all year. Looking for plants to introduce color, texture and form as well as fragrance and movement is a smart move.

Keep in mind the season you're hoping to influence.

Some of my best choices to consider are:

Color:

Leaves on evergreen plants,

Loropetalum chinense (purple leaf varieties), *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'SunSpray', *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Little Gem', *Yucca filamentosa* 'Color Guard'

Blooms,

Camellia Sasanqua and *Camellia Japonica* (many varieties), *Mahonia bealei*, *Hamamelis vernalis*, *Helleborus orientalis*

Stems and Bark,

Acer palmatum 'Bihou' and 'Sango-kaku', *Lagerstroemia indica* x *fauriei* varieties, *Cornus sericea*, *Cornus kousa*

Berries,

Many of the Evergreen Hollies, *Ilex verticillata*, *Callicarpa americana*, *Pyracantha coccinea*

Textures:

Bark,

Acer griseum, *Betula niga* 'Heritage', *Ulmus parvifolia* 'Allee'

Form/Shape:

Cedrus atlantica 'Glauca Pendula', *Ilex opaca* 'Maryland Dwarf'

Structural interest:

Acer palmatum var. *dissectum* 'Crimson Queen', *Corylus avellana* 'Contota'

Fragrance:

Daphne odora 'Aureomarginata', *Eriobotrya japonica*, *Hamamelis vernalis*

Movement:

Most Ornamental Grasses, *Panicum virgatum* 'Northwind', *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Standing Ovation'

Many of these plants add interest the rest of the year as well. Remember to consider the allotted space provided and the hardiness and exposure tolerances of the choices you make.

Horticultural Society Events & Workshops

Linda Hamwi

As always, the fall months have flown by. In September we had Master Gardener and bonsai specialist Harold Johnson come and teach us how to create and style our own bonsai plants. Harold was kind enough to give back to back workshops to accommodate more participants. His classes were hands on and very popular. Harold promised to come back next year and give another workshop, along with a presentation on how to care for your plants.

Our September Lunch & Learn had 39 people following Dee Johnson around the Horticulture Gardens on a beautiful fall day. Who better to lead a walking tour around the gardens than the head of the Horticulture Department!!

Columbus Day rolled around and we had a full house for our pumpkin centerpiece workshop. Twenty participants went home with a bright orange porcelain pumpkin full of beautiful fall flowers. Leslie Habets, owner of Jack Hadden Floral Design, and Vicki Garner, one of her designers, taught us how to arrange live fall flowers in a decorative

container. We're hoping they will come back next year too!

October 14th was the annual Fall Plant Sale held by the Sandhills Horticulture Club. It was a good turnout, with smiling homeowners taking their newly purchased trees, shrubs and fall flowers off to plant in their yards.

Also in October, Debbie Roos, NC Cooperative Extension Agent gave a wonderful presentation on designing a pollinator garden. The virtual tour of her demonstration pollinator garden in Pittsboro was amazing. Debbie also shared all the resources she's found and developed for anyone interested in enhancing pollinator habitat. Thanks to the Council of Garden Clubs & the Sandhills Horticulture Society for sponsoring such a great presentation.

Merry Christmas to all and see you next year!!! Don't forget Taylor Williams annual pruning workshop on January 20th.

Upcoming Events . . .

Register by emailing landscapegardening@sandhills.edu or call Tricia Mabe at 910-695-3882

Maggie Smith – Christmas Flower Arranging

December 6 (Wednesday) 10AM to Noon – Ball Visitors Center

Maggie Smith of Maggie's Farm designs will conduct this ever popular workshop. Participants will go home with a gorgeous holiday arrangement and have lots of Christmas cheer while learning how to put it together.

Horticultural Society Members \$40, non-members \$50. Space is limited to 24.

Pruning Workshop

January 20 (Saturday) 10AM to Noon – Ball Visitors Center

Moore County Extension Agent Taylor Williams will answer all questions about how and when to prune your trees and shrubs to keep them healthy and looking great. Learn pruning basics, then go outside for a demonstration on how it's done.

Free – but reservations are necessary.

Winter Gardening Tips

- ❄️ Do not forget to recycle your Christmas tree and other greenery. The tree makes a great bird sanctuary in your garden for the winter.
- ❄️ In January, you may start planting your cool season vegetable crops such as peas.
- ❄️ January, February is the time to prune your grapes and fruit trees.
- ❄️ Place pre-emergent weed control on your turf in February.
- ❄️ Winter is a great time to prune deciduous trees and shrubs. Just remember if it blooms before May you will be cutting off blooms that have set.
- ❄️ Spray dormant oil for pest control. Read label for temperatures restrictions before spraying.
- ❄️ Don't forget to feed the birds.



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A Gift That Keeps On Giving

Your gift of a Sandhills Horticultural Society membership includes a FREE subscription to Better Homes and Gardens magazine. In addition to BH&G a membership includes many more on-going benefits. Such as . . .

- Free Garden Seminars
- A discount at the student's spring and fall plant sales
- Access to Horticultural Trips
- Bloomin' News quarterly newsletter
- Use of the Ball Garden Visitors Center for garden related events
- Reciprocal admission to over 200 gardens throughout North America
- A member discount on Horticultural Society workshops and programs
- Continuing educational opportunities

The most important benefit of membership is support of the Sandhills Horticultural Gardens. Membership dues and Society sponsored programs provide the funds required for the planned development and maintenance of the Gardens.

Gift Membership Information 2017-2018

Name of Membership Recipient _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email Address _____

Please make checks payable to: SCC – Sandhills Horticultural Society.

____ Individual \$25.00 ____ Family \$45.00 ____ Individual Life \$350.00

Buyer's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email Address _____

Enclosed is a check in the amount of _____

We will send a card to acknowledge your special gift. Message you want included:

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