

Plant Shrubs that are Less Common in Cache Valley

In a continuation of my last few columns on underutilized plants, this week I will focus on a few shrubs that work well in the home landscape. Some shrubs that are very commonly used include many species and cultivars of spirea and euonymus including burning bush. Boxwoods, common lilac and common privet are also too frequently seen. Shrubs are some of the most useful tools with their variation in size, flower color and other characteristics. When it comes to landscape design, depending on your situation and needs, there is a shrub that will fit the bill. Again this list is not at all comprehensive but just highlights a few of the great shrubs that are available that are not as commonly used.

- Dwarf Oregon grape holly: Oregon grape holly is one of the few broadleaf-evergreen shrubs that will grow in Utah's colder mountain valleys. Its leaves resemble those of the true hollies although not related to them. Leaves turn a very pretty plum purple in late autumn and winter and revert back to green in the summer. It is very shade tolerant and also beneficial to wildlife. Dwarf Oregon grape holly grows to 4 feet high and wide. A common form is also available and grows to between 6 and 8 feet high and wide.
- Dwarf Korean Lilac: Old fashioned/common lilacs have been very popular in the past and will continue to be in the future. However the advantage to using Dwarf Korean lilac over common lilac is that it is much more manageable in today's smaller landscape where it stays much smaller than old fashioned/common lilac. It also still has the same great lilac flowers and scent in the spring and is very drought tolerant. Miss Kim Lilac is also great for use where common lilac may get too big.
- Rose of Sharon: Rose of Sharon is not completely hardy in Utah's colder mountain valleys but can be used where it receives full sun and protection from the coldest winter temperatures. It has a longer bloom season than almost any other shrub used in the Utah landscape, where it blooms from mid-July until early October. Flower colors vary from white to lavender-pink and purple and resemble those seen in traditional Hawaiian leis. Rose of Sharon will reach 10 feet high and wide but a dwarf variety called Lil Kim that grows to only 3 or 4 feet high and wide is becoming more available. Lil Kim also holds flowers longer and has a darker, more ornamental green leaf than standard varieties. Rose of Sharon is also drought tolerant once established.
- Simplicity Roses: Simplicity roses are a series of shrub roses that repeat bloom the entire growing season and are also very pest and disease resistant. They can grow to six feet high and wide when left un-pruned but tolerate and sometimes benefit from an occasional haircut. They are available in a multitude of colors. Roses have thorns and should be kept away from high traffic areas. However this may also make them useful for planting under teenagers bedroom windows that have a tendency to sneak out past curfew. Another series of roses that carry the Meidiland name are also very useful landscape roses.
- New Mexico Privet: This is a native shrub that can be used as a replacement for common privet and other large shrubs used for screening and hedging. It is fast growing and has ornamental yellow fall foliage. It also has nice early-spring flowers that are present before leaves emerge. New Mexico privet, sometimes called desert olive, may be somewhat harder to find but is worth

the effort. Sources include nurseries that carry native plants and folks at your local farmers market.

Ask local garden centers and businesses that sale plant material for what they have that may be underutilized. They would be happy to make suggestion beyond what is listed here. Be adventurous and have fun.