

Successful Gardener

NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping
Carolinians
Increase Their
Knowledge of
Gardening,
Manage Their
Landscape
Investment &
Protect the
Environment

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JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

Deodar Cedar Adds Grace to Landscape

The Deodar cedar, *Cedrus deodara*, is one of the most graceful cedars, especially in youth, and has become a favorite among homeowners and landscapers. The tree is broadly pyramidal with graceful pendulous branches that become wide-spreading and flat-topped in old age.

The tree's fine, textured foliage ranges from light blue to grayish green to silvery in color. The cones are 3 to 4 inches long by approximately 3 inches broad on short branchlets. The Deodar grows about 2 feet in a year when young. If root pruned, the Deodar transplants easily. The tree prefers a well drained, somewhat dry, sunny location and protection from sweeping winds.

There are many evergreen nurseries that have expanded their catalog lists to include *C. deodara* cultivars. Three interesting cultivars are 'Kashmir', a hardy form with silvery blue-green foliage that can withstand temperature drops to below zero; 'Kingsville', similar to 'Kashmir' but possibly hardier; and 'Shalimar', which boasts good blue-green color, excellent hardiness and grows 9 to 15 feet in 10 years from a cutting.

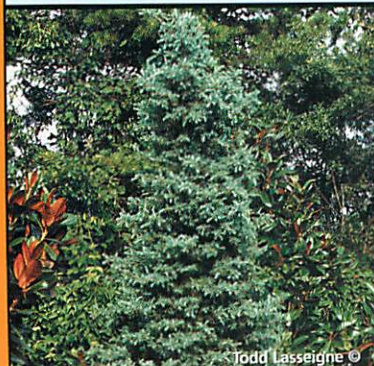
Due to its fine, textured foliage, Deodar cedar allows light and water to penetrate the grass or groundcovers that grow below. The few needles that drop are easy to clean up. You don't have to worry about solid mats of fallen leaves that may threaten to smother other plants. Deodar cedar is a good substitute for the white pine but is subject to cold injury in zone 6.

The Deodar cedar is well represented at the JC Raulston Arboretum. Look for over 30 different cultivars within their collections, ranging from those with a prostrate habit, to those with a bluish cast to their foliage, to those exhibiting pendulous, drooping branches. This is truly one species with tremendous possibilities for the landscape!

Willie Earl Wilson



All photos
*Cedrus
deodara*
Todd Lasseigne ©



Todd Lasseigne ©



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'Townhouse' Crape Myrtle



Japanese Apricot



Japanese Maple

These Trees Add Interest to Winter Landscape

If your landscape seems to have fallen into the winter doldrums, then it's the perfect time to think about adding some seasonal interest to your garden. Many Carolina gardeners rely heavily on the spring bloomers, such as dogwoods, azaleas and daffodils, and ignore the possibilities for spicing up the winter garden.

Landscaping for winter interest requires a shift in focus for those who are accustomed to the spring garden. Rather than bright yellows, violets and pinks, the color palette shifts to golds, browns, shades of dark green and the occasional splash of red or white. Rather than bombarding the senses, the winter landscape offers subtle contrasts. Differences in texture and form provide a stark beauty.

Trees can add spice in several ways to the winter landscape. Although there are a few winter bloomers such as the flowering apricot, *Prunus mume*, most winter interest trees are chosen for interesting bark, attractive form, evergreen foliage or brightly colored berries.

Choose Trees with Striking Bark

The casual gardener, for example, may fail to notice the striking bark of the crape myrtle. When properly pruned, the smooth, rust-colored stems can become a real centerpiece among the golds and tans of winter. Other trees, with exfoliating or peeling bark such as the river birch, *Betula nigra*, add striking textures. The paperbark maple, *Acer griseum*, offers mottled patches of tan, rust and gray. Korean and Japanese Stewartias, *Stewartia koreana* and *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, sport patches of green, brown and gray.

Consider Weeping or Contorted Forms

Many deciduous trees, once they shed their leaves, reveal gracefully arranged trunks and branches. The weeping form of the Japanese flowering cherry, *Prunus subhirtella* 'Pendula', is the classic example. Many of the Japanese maple, *Acer palmatum*, cultivars serve the purpose equally well. Also keep an eye out for trees that come in a "contorted" form, with strikingly twisted branches. These are certain to become a conversation piece. Harry Lauder's Walking Stick, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta', a contorted variety of hazelnut, is sure to please. Contorted mulberry, *Morus australis* 'Unryu', and corkscrew willow, *Salix matsudana* 'Tortuosa', are also worthy contenders, living up to their names. As a bonus, the stems make fabulous additions to winter flower arrangements.

Brighten with Berries

Berry producers add a splash of bright color to the winter landscape, though in some cases the birds may finish off the harvest before you finish enjoying it. Hollies tend to have long-lasting berries. The birds often save them for late winter after they have exhausted more preferred winter fare. Cultivars with a tall pyramidal shape and glossy green leaves are the classic form. Also consider weeping yaupon holly, *Ilex vomitoria* 'Pendula', which boasts both abundant berries and a graceful branch structure. Keep in mind that hollies bear male and female flowers on separate trees. If you are purchasing a holly for winter interest, buy it during berry season to be certain you have the right gender. Although some are self-fertile, many varieties require a male plant nearby for pollination or no berries will set.

Don't forget the red berries of dogwood, and don't limit yourself to *Cornus florida*, the old standard. Kousa, *Cornus kousa*, and Tatarian, *Cornus alba*, dogwoods are among those worth considering.

Enjoy the Evergreens

Evergreens offer more than their name implies. By carefully selecting and mixing your choices, you can bring shades of yellow, gold and blue into the winter landscape palette. Southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, provides large, thick, dark green leaves. If the size of your lot gives you pause at the thought of planting a tree that will eventually reach awesome proportions, consider the sweet bay magnolia, *Magnolia virginiana*, a much smaller cousin.

For large lots, the stately deodar cedar, *Cedrus deodara*, makes a bold statement. This 70-foot evergreen grows in a wide pyramidal form, with gracefully extended branches. Hinoki false cypress, *Chamaecyparis obtusa*, grows to 20 feet and is available in a golden hued form. Try emerald green arborvitae for subtle shades of bluish-green.

When choosing trees for the winter landscape, consider what the tree may have to offer in other seasons. In small urban lots, multipurpose plants that offer something in more than one season are the way to go. The Stewartias, for example, provide flowers in the summer and attractive foliage color in the fall. Small trees with multiseason interest will maximize your landscape investment.

Remember, before planting any tree, consult your local Cooperative Extension Center, reputable nursery or a good gardening reference book to find out the full-grown height and spread and preferred environment. **Paul McKenzie**

gardentalk

"Nature is full of genius, full of divinity, so that not a snowflake escapes its fashioning hand."

Henry David Thoreau





How much soil should I put over exposed tree roots?

As little as necessary or maybe none at all. Tree roots often are exposed after construction, any type of grading, soil erosion or shallow soil preparation in the planting area. Also, some trees, such as silver maples, have naturally shallow anchor roots. Roots prefer to grow in the path of least resistance and toward moisture.

Soil over exposed roots can reduce the decline of trees if it is coarser than the soil below. This means that it's best to use a sandy loam, bark, peat or compost blend over a clay soil. Since roots need air in order to grow in a normal manner, generally more than one inch of the same soil texture may be too much as it would restrict airflow. Four inches, however, of a coarse blend or mulch is acceptable.

Naturalizing the areas where roots surface is a better alternative. Shredded leaves, bark, pine needles, wood chips or small stones will allow better air and water movement into the ground. Naturalizing also cuts down on mowing time. This also reduces compaction and the danger of mechanical equipment to the tree's trunk. Regardless of which material is used, always leave it a few inches from the trunk to avoid crown rot.

Covering exposed tree roots is too often left to a heavy equipment operator only. Trees may slowly die over a 10-year period because of root suffocation from too much heavy topsoil. Protecting trees during construction is a highly recommended practice that requires communication between homeowners, developers and equipment operators. *Donald Breedlove*

Poinsettia Pointers

Many of us receive or buy poinsettias for holiday gifts and, once the holiday is over, off to the compost pile go the spent poinsettia plants. However, if you are a serious plant lover you can keep that poinsettia alive for years to come.

Watering correctly will greatly extend the life of your poinsettia. Water the plant well so that the potting soil is slightly wet, but not soggy. Make sure there are holes in the bottom of the pot to drain out any excess water. Pour off any water that collects in the saucer. Poinsettias do not like wet feet, but they also cannot tolerate drying out. If a poinsettia is allowed to dry out it will drop its leaves. Underwatering is the most common cause of poinsettia death.

Temperature also plays a crucial role in the life of your poinsettia. The optimal temperature range is 70 to 75 F daytime and 60 to 65 F nighttime. Temperatures above 75 F will cause leaf drop, and temperatures below 55 F will cause chilling injury. Poinsettias are sensitive to drafty locations so avoid placing your plant near doors, heating vents or on top of appliances. Poinsettias need a well lighted area to maintain bract color and avoid leaf drop. Try to keep your plant in a south, east or west exposure for direct sunlight. Remember, a sunnier location will increase the water needs of the plant.

Amy-Lynn Albertson

ENVIRO-TIP

Two Steps to Healthier Plants

A soil test and a plant tissue analysis are two services for gardeners provided by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. All gardeners should test their soil on a regular basis for best results. A soil test measures whether elements such as phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulfur, manganese, copper and zinc are available in amounts the plant needs. The amount of available nutrients in the sample determines how much and what type of fertilizer to use. A soil test also measures soil pH and humic matter. These factors determine whether to apply lime and the amount needed. It is best to submit soil samples several months prior to planting in order to allow time for the chemical changes that need to occur following fertilization and liming. Since plants and microorganisms

continually use and break down nutrients, it's best to test soils every 2 to 4 years.

Plant tissue analysis consists of a series of chemical tests to determine the concentrations of essential nutrients in a plant, and whether supplementation is necessary for optimum growth. Results allow the correction of nutrient deficiencies before they reach a critical stage. Tissue analysis is used more by commercial farmers and nurserymen than homeowners since correcting a nutrient deficiency in a crop at the right time may avoid serious yield and quality losses. However, homeowners may want to make use of tissue analysis if they suspect nutrient deficiencies. Contact your Cooperative Extension Center for soil sampling and plant tissue analysis kits.

Royce Hardin



Robert E. Lyons ©



Gardening in December

Lawns

- Coastal lawns will soon be dormant. Continue to mow cool-season lawns, rake leaves and water during dry spells.
- Apply broadleaf herbicides to control winter annual and perennial weeds. Watch for dry or windy conditions that can injure turf.
- Fertilize cool-season lawns in early December if not completed in November.

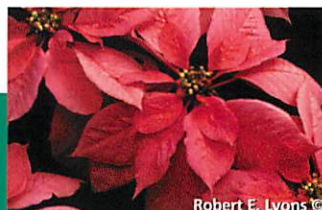
Ornamentals

- Keep good pruning practices in mind while collecting greenery for holiday decorations. Popular plant material choices include foliage and berries from hollies and nandinas.
 - Mulch perennials, trees and shrubs now while it is easy to navigate beds without harming other plants.
 - Many holiday gift plants may already have slow-release fertilizer added and won't need more fertilizer until spring.
 - Be sure to check holiday plants such as poinsettias for insects before bringing them inside. Diseases are normally not a problem this time of year.
 - Your old Christmas tree need not go to waste. Lay branches over perennials to keep them protected or place entire tree in wooded area for wildlife protection.
 - Houseplants can get dusty periodically; wash leaf surfaces with mild soap and water.

Edibles

- Order fruit trees adapted for your area and designate shipping dates that avoid hard, frozen ground problems when planting.
- Prune grape vines and use in wreath making for the holidays.

Diane Ashburn



Robert E. Lyons ©

Garden Spot

The Plant

Hunter's Garden – The New Explorers and Their Discoveries – is a great gift idea for plant enthusiasts. Written by Bobby J. Ward, who received a Ph.D in botany from NC State University, the book profiles 32 of today's more prolific plant hunters. From the Czech Republic to the Rocky Mountains, Ward has sought out those explorers in the private sector who are collecting plants for horticultural introduction. The focus of the book is on the plants, but Ward also provides interesting details on the lives and careers of the explorers. The book includes beautiful photography.

Copies of the book are available at the JC Raulston Arboretum Gift Shop for \$39.95. Call (919) 513-7457 for shop hours. If you're not in the Raleigh area, check with your local bookstore or order from www.timberpress.com. This Web site also provides a listing of the many locations in the state Ward will visit early next year to discuss his book.

Leah Chester-Davis

Poinsettia Open House at the JC Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh

Sunday, Dec. 5, 2004 – 1 to 5 p.m. Free
More than 110 different poinsettia cultivars will be on display.
Details at www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum or call (919) 515-3132.

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