

BERRIES COME IN MANY COLORS

To bridge the color gap in the landscape between the display of autumn leaves until the splash of spring flowering bulbs, we can rely on colorful fruits and berries. Berried plants in the landscape may provide almost any color we choose from bright reds and oranges to white, gray, blue, purple, or black. In addition to attractive colors, many berries attract birds to our homes to provide added interest.

Red shades are the most sought-after berry colors for winter landscape display. Fortunately, there are many ornamental plants that provide red and red-orange berry color. Holly berries are favorites and may be found in both evergreen and deciduous types. Evergreen types such as American holly and Foster's holly are very attractive. Hollies that drop their leaves, such as the winterberry, display their bright red color well. Winterberry develops into a small or medium-sized shrub. A similar holly, known as deciduous holly, eventually becomes a small tree. Most hollies usually hold their berries until late winter, but occasionally a flock of hungry birds find them sooner.

A few other plants that produce bright red berries include the flowering dogwood, Japanese barberry, and rockspray cotoneaster. Some viburnums also provide excellent red color. These include the American and European cranberry bush, as well as the Wright and linden-leaved viburnum. Flowering crabapples also provide fruit in many shades of red.

Most popular of the red-orange or orange-fruited plants is the firethorn or pyracantha. This plant produces its berries most abundantly when placed in a sunny location with relatively poor soil.

Hawthorns, such as the Washington and winter king hawthorn, become small trees that

provide an excellent red-orange display. The native bittersweet is an excellent vine for red-orange fall berries. Both male and female plants are needed.

Yellow is a more unusual fruit color in ornamental plants but may be found in some crabapples. Yellow-berried varieties have also been developed in holly, viburnum, and nandina.

For white color in the landscape, the snowberry is most often used. Well grown, it can be attractive, but it is attacked by several diseases that must be controlled if it is to fruit well. Where the diseases are present, all current growth should be cut to the ground and destroyed. Next year sprays of a fungicide such as zineb or ferbam should be applied at about two-week intervals from the time the leaves first emerge.

White berries are also produced by the Siberian dogwood, which has added interest because of the red coloration of its bark.

An outstanding plant for gray berries is the bayberry. The silvery-gray berries are produced in abundance where conditions are right. Plants have separate sexes, and male and female plants must be placed close together for best berry production.

Blue and purple berries are relatively uncommon. The Japanese Beautyberry has violet to metallic-purple berries that are eye-catching, but not long-lasting. They remain only a few weeks after the leaves have fallen.

Blue shades may be found in the Southern black haw, Oregon hollygrape and arrowwood viburnum. This is a good time to observe berried plants that we may want to add to our own landscape in the spring. —Ray Rothenberger, *Extension Horticulturist, University of Missouri*.