

A Winter Wonderland of Fragrance

Why does it seem to most folks that spring, summer and autumn last for about a month, and that winter seems to go on and on for over half the year? As gardeners, perhaps it is because there are so many duties and chores for us to accomplish during the active growing season that it makes the year pass by quickly, whereas winter is a



Sasanqua Camellia

time for garden slumber with little for us to do. It is also the most advantageous time for a gardener's reflection of the gardening seasons just passed and some much needed rest for our garden-weary bodies and an opportunity to enjoy the beauty and serenity of the winter season.

If wintertime seems to hang on much longer than you would like, there are some things as gardeners we can do to focus on the beauty and joy of the season and perhaps psychologically shorten it a bit.

There has been much written about the fact that in the winter, we are able to see the "bones" of our garden, after the trees and shrubs have lost their covering, and many perennials have retreated to the life-sustaining

warmth of the soil, awaiting the first breath of spring. Truly, there is abundant beauty in the structure of gardens in winter, but there can and should be more than that to delight and inspire.

Nature, in her infinite bounty, has given us many fragrant blooming plants to heighten our appreciation of an otherwise underappreciated garden season. Besides, she has extended the delights from beginning to the end of the season.

Many winter flowering shrubs are less than special for the rest of the year, but while "on stage" and in flower during the winter months, they also have the added impact of being heavily scented. Why is this you ask? It is simply because they are attempting to attract any pollinating insects that are active at this time. Since most winter flowers are pale in color, creatures working in winter have a greater ability to "smell" rather than "see", thus the attracting fragrance the plants provide.

Scent in the garden should be an intermittent pleasure which you can achieve by careful consideration given to where you place the plants. There is little point placing them great distances from your house where you would be unlikely to visit on a cold and bleak winter's day. A perfect place to enjoy them would be near a front or back door or in an enclosed seating area where the fragrance would be trapped. It is also prudent to place them close to a garden path, perhaps leading to or from a gazebo or greenhouse, to be enjoyed often and up close.

Some beauties to enjoy include Mahonia Japonica (Oregon Grape), Winter Honeysuckle (Lonicera Fragrantissima), Wintersweet (Chimonanthus Praecox), Winter Daphne, Corylopsis (Winterhazel), Camellia (C. Sasanqua) *pictured*, Sarcococca, also known as Christmas Box, with an intense vanilla scent, and Viburnum (x Bodnantense), with pink clusters of sweetly scented flowers on perfectly naked branches.

Guard against placing too many of your winter perfumers too close together. You'll want to enjoy their individual aromas in different parts of your garden. Planting in too close proximity to one another will result in the inability to experience the pleasure of each of their distinct fragrances.

Wintertime.....an opportunity to relax, reflect, and drink in the many wonderful and serene sights and smells of the season!

Resource

Brickell, Christopher; Zuk, Judith D.; Editors in Chief; *The American Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*, DK Publishing, Inc., NY, 1997.