



Top Tips For Winter Colour

As the beautiful Autumn leaf colour blows away by mid-November winter has truly arrived in the garden. But it doesn't need to be bleak. Often the first thing we do is reach for the winter bedding and bring back some instant flower colour with winter flowering Pansies, Violas, Cyclamen and Primroses. The next resort is to buy some evergreens such as Ivy, Rhododendrons or Laurel or those with added berries such as Skimmia, Gaultheria, Holly and these will all add winter interest either in your borders or containers.

But, if you plan ahead, you can use a wider range of perennial plants in your borders to give you colour and interest through the winter. I've visited some inspiring Winter Gardens at Dunham Massey in Cheshire, Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire and Cambridge Botanic Garden that show that you don't even need to have plants with leaves to create interest.

Choose shrubs that can be pruned down to the ground in March to produce brightly coloured bark or stems during the Winter; these include the bright red (Cornus alba 'Siberica'), yellow (Cornus sericea 'Flaviramea'), orange (Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'), purple/black (Salix nigricans) and white (Rubus cockburnianus).

There are also trees with coloured bark that stand out in the low winter light such as the white Silver Birch (Betula utilis var. jacquemontii), glossy chestnut Tibetan Cherry (Prunus serrula), vertical stripes of Snakebark Maple (Acer davidii) and the red/brown 'peeling paper' bark of Acer griseum.

Plants that surprise and delight in the depths of Winter are those that produce scented flowers on bare stems; these include Daphne mezereum, Hamamelis mollis, Chimonanthus praecox 'Luteus' and Viburnum x bodnantense 'Dawn'.

Evergreen herbaceous perennial plants such as Bergenia cordifolia, Hellbores and Heathers provide leaf colour and the latter two will also provide flower colour.

So there is no excuse for have a drab garden in the winter!