



Toronto Master Gardeners  
Toronto Master Gardeners are trained volunteers dedicated to providing horticultural information to the public.

For answers to horticultural questions contact the Toronto Master Gardeners' Info Line at the Toronto Botanical Garden (416) 397-1345 (Mon. to Fri. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Sat., Sun. and Holidays noon to 3 p.m.) or our website, [www.questions.torontomastergardeners.ca](http://www.questions.torontomastergardeners.ca).

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Toronto Botanical Garden  
Toronto Botanical Garden is a volunteer-based, charitable organization whose purpose is to inspire passion, respect and understanding of gardening, horticulture, the natural landscape and a healthy environment.

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## DECIDUOUS TREES AND SHRUBS WITH EXCEPTIONAL BLOOMS

### DESCRIPTION

Deciduous trees and shrubs are plants that lose their leaves in the fall.

Trees are generally single stemmed while shrubs tend to be multi-stemmed plants.

In the fall, the leaves of some trees and shrubs change colour to vibrant hues of red, yellow or orange before losing them altogether. The intensity of the fall colour will often depend on the growing conditions of the season.

Most trees and shrubs bloom in the spring before their leaves emerge. As always, there are exceptions. For example, *Buddleia davidii* (Butterfly Bush) blooms in mid-summer while *Hibiscus syriacus* (Rose of Sharon), and *Caryopteris clandonensis* (Blue Mist Shrub) bloom in late summer.

Both trees and shrubs provide visually pleasing colourful flowers, scent, contrast, vertical and horizontal height and form to the landscape. As an added bonus, many blooming trees and shrubs produce colourful fruit or berries in the fall, attracting wildlife and extending their interest into the winter.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT BLOOMING TREE OR SHRUB

#### Location in the Garden:

A strategically placed flowering tree or shrub can be used as a focal point in the garden. Tiered plantings are also an option, with taller growing material planted toward the back of the garden and shorter material in front. This arrangement will allow all of the plants to be seen.

Flowering ornamental fruit trees may be outstanding in the spring. However, bear in mind the possibility of messy fallen fruit that may come later in the summer or fall. Avoid planting them near walkways or driveways.

When planting, the size at maturity (height x width) should also be taken into consideration. Is there plenty of growing space away from buildings and overhead wires?

**Hardiness Zone:**

Hardiness zones are another very important consideration when selecting flowering shrubs or trees. Make sure the tree or shrub you are considering will survive in your area. Check the tag when purchasing as it will tell you the minimum winter temperature the plant can tolerate.

**Lighting:**

Lighting is another important factor to consider when choosing a flowering tree or shrub. In order for your new plant to thrive, it must have the right amount of light. Six plus hours is deemed Full Sun, whether it's direct late-morning or afternoon sun. Four to six hours is considered partial sun and less than four hours is considered full shade (no direct sun but in a bright location). The tag on your new plant will have an icon representing the plant's light requirements. If it says full sun and your garden is shady, don't buy it!

**Soil Type:**

Is the soil acidic or alkaline? It may be necessary to do a soil analysis to determine whether your soil is suited to the tree or shrub you have chosen. Amendments may be necessary in order to be sure your new plant will thrive in your garden. Also check to see whether your soil is clay, loam or sandy. This may also affect the ability for your plant to bloom and thrive. Ultimately, the best approach is to choose the right plant for the right location to ensure its health and vigor.

**MAINTENANCE**

Shrubs and trees will require little maintenance if they are sited and planted properly with the required nutrients. They must be watered regularly until established and also in times of drought. Make sure you use rich amended soil from the beginning and top dress every spring with good compost, well-rotted manure or quality organic fertilizer.

**Pruning:**

Pruning is a method of controlling growth, shape and enhancing the quality or quantity of flowers and fruit on trees and shrubs.

Always use sharp tools and sterilize the tools with a mixture of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water after each cut to prevent the spread of disease. Remove branches that are dead, diseased, or damaged. You may also want to consider removing branches that do not go with the character of the tree or shrub.

Thinning out branches by pruning should also be considered as it improves air circulation which helps to prevent mould. Thinning also increases light penetration to the center of the tree or shrub, thus improving photosynthesis. This means less spraying is required.

It is important to know when to prune your flowering trees and shrubs. Some trees and shrubs flower on the current year's wood and others bloom on last year's wood. If you prune them at the wrong time, you may eliminate flower buds and end up with a poor show.

Some examples of shrubs that flower on the current year's wood are : *Hydrangea quercifolia* (Oakleaf Hydrangea), *Berberis thunbergii* (Barberry) and *Weigela florida* (Weigela). Generally, shrubs in this category are pruned in the spring.

Shrubs that flower on last years wood are : *Syringa vulgaris* (Lilac), *Forsythia*, *Deutzia gracilis* (Deutzia), and *Philadelphus viginialis* (Mock orange). Generally, shrubs in this category are pruned directly after the blooms have faded and before next year's buds have formed.

**SUGGESTED BLOOMING TREES AND SHRUBS****Trees:**

*Malus X robusta* - Cherry Crabapple  
*Cornus florida* – Dogwood  
*Laburnum anagyroides* – Golden Chain tree  
*Magnolia macrophylla* – Magnolia  
*Hibiscus syriacus* – Rose of Sharon  
*Liriodendron* – Tulip Tree

**Shrubs:**

*Azalea* – Azalea  
*Kolkwitzia* – Beauty Bush  
*Callicarpa* – Beauty Berry  
*Hydrangea macrophylla* – Bigleaf Hydrangea  
*Caryopteris clandonensis* – Blue Mist Shrub  
*Spirea prunifolia* – Bridal Wreath Spirea  
*Daphne x burkwoodii* – Burkwood Daphne  
*Buddleia* – Butterfly Bush  
*Viburnum trilobum* – Cranberry Bush  
*Potentilla* – Cinquefoil  
*Syringa vulgaris* – Common Lilac  
*Fothergilla gardenii* – Dwarf Fothergilla  
*Sambucus canadensis* - Elderberry  
*Forsythia* – Forsythia  
*Hamamelis x intermedia* – Hybrid Witch Hazel  
*Philadelphus* – Mock Orange  
*Physocarpus* – Ninebark  
*Hydrangea quercifolia* – Oak-Leaf Hydrangea  
*Salix* – Pussy Willow  
*Rhododendron* – Rhododendron  
*Hibiscus syriacus* – Rose-of Sharon  
*Clethra alnifolia* – Summer- Sweet  
*Weigela florida* – Weigela

## REFERENCES :

The City of Toronto adopted a new municipal by-law (spring 2009) that restricts the use of pesticides. For details about the by-law visit the Pesticide by-law page on Toronto Public Health's Web site at [www.city.toronto.on.ca/pesticides](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/pesticides) or [www.toronto.ca/health](http://www.toronto.ca/health). Questions may be e-mailed to [pesticide@toronto.ca](mailto:pesticide@toronto.ca)

The Weston Family Library at the Toronto Botanical Garden is an excellent source of information on all aspects of horticulture. The book and periodical catalogue can be accessed from the website:  
<http://www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca/library/search.htm>

## BOOKS :

Thomas, William, ed. *Hearst Garden Guides. Trees and Shrubs*. New York : Hearst Books, 1992.

Hyland, Bob. *Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Shrubs, The New Glamour Plants*. New York: 1994.