

**Fall 2009**


# *From the Ground Up* ↑

## Autumn Encore

Autumn colour on a grand scale is not always possible in a smaller garden but by carefully choosing trees and shrubs, those of us with limited space can still bring some of the drama into our own gardens at this time of year, often with repeat performances that match or even surpassed their spring or summer display.

Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) has dainty white clusters of flowers in the spring, followed by bright red berries in late summer which persist into winter. Its fall foliage is bright red to burgundy in colour—a real star in the autumn landscape.

Autumn Magic Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) is a small shrub covered with masses of tiny white flowers in spring giving way to shiny black fruit that the birds will eat. Its small green leaves turn to wonderful shades of red, orange and purple in fall.

Dwarf Burning Bush (*Euonymus alatus 'Compacta'*) is a shrub that blends into the landscape most of the year with its bright green foliage but in the fall its almost neon reddish-pink colour is truly magnificent.

### Watering Tip



Evergreen leaves lose moisture throughout the winter and are unable to replenish lost moisture from frozen ground. Although you should decrease watering on all plants and shrubs over the course of the fall, you should give your evergreens one last heavy watering as close to freeze-up as possible.

# Spotlight on



## Autumn Joy Sedum

This clump forming perennial provides a long season of interest with its spoon shaped leaves and flat topped clusters of flowers that start out as ivory pink buds and progress to bright pink or red and finally coppery brown seed heads. Leave them standing in the garden over the winter. They like lots of sun and are very drought tolerant. Hardy to zone 3, it will reach a size of 24" tall and wide.

## Blue Danube Juniper

This vase shaped spreading evergreen has attractive bluish-green foliage year round. It does well in most soil conditions and is quite drought tolerant, thriving in full to part sun. Hardy to zone 3, it will reach a size of 24" tall and 7' wide.



## Muckle Plum

This wonderful spring-flowering plant is a small multi-stemmed shrub or small tree which is covered with lush blooms very early in the season. It is a wonderful addition to a small yard. It prefers full sun and well drained soil. Hardy to zone 3, it will mature to a size of 15' tall and 10' wide.

# Drying Herbs



*Like fresh herbs, dried herbs can add so much to a meal. Herbs are so easy to grow and use. They are also easily dried to preserve, giving you a year round supply to add to your cooking.*

The key to successfully drying herbs is preserving them at their best when essential oils are at their peak. In most cases, this is just before the flowers bloom. Mints should be done while in full bloom. It is a simple process to preserve your own dried herbs.

Cut off the top six inches of the stalk where the tender leaves are. This should be done in the morning before the heat of the day robs the plant leaves of their essential oils. Remove any tough or old leaves.

Wipe any dirt off the cuttings, but don't soak the stems or leaves. Dampness will cause mould to form.

Gather into bunches of 6-8 stems and put them upside down in a small paper bag. Secure with an elastic band or string around the top of the bag. Put a few small holes in the bag to promote circulation. The bag allows the air and moisture to pass through but prevents dust from accumulating on the herbs. It is a good idea to label the bags with the contents.

Hang the bag in an airy place away from direct sunlight. This can be indoors or out, but there must be circulating air. It usually takes a couple of weeks to completely dry the herbs. When the leaves crumble easily, they're ready. At this point, check for signs of mould (if mould is present, throw out the entire batch) and then remove the leaves from the stalk by running your hand down the stalk. Try not to crush them as the best flavor is preserved in whole leaves. Discard the stems.

Store your dried herbs in small, air tight containers. Dark glass is best to preserve their colour. Label the containers. Heat and sunlight are both unkind to fragile herb colours and tastes so keep them in a cupboard away from the stove. The dried herbs should remain flavourful for about a year.

## Drying Herbs in the Oven

If you don't have time to dry herbs in the traditional way, you can speed up the process by using your conventional oven. Arrange the herbs on a cookie sheet, and set them on the center rack. Leave the door slightly ajar, and use the lowest setting on your oven (no higher than 100 degrees F. Stir occasionally. The herbs are dry when they crumble.

## Freezing Herbs

Another method of storing herbs is to freeze them. This will maintain the flavour of the herbs but the leaves will be limp and watery when thawed. They won't be useful as a garnish. There are two easy ways to do this. Spread leaves on a cookie sheet and place in freezer. When individually frozen, place in an airtight bag or container to store or place leaves into an ice cube tray and fill cubes with water. Freeze. To use, drop the entire cube into the recipe.



**"In the garden, Autumn is, indeed the crowning glory of the year, bringing us the fruition of months of thought and care and toil.**

**And at no season, save perhaps in Daffodil time, do we get such superb colour effects as from August to November."**

**- Rose G. Kingsley, *The Autumn Garden*, 1905**



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