

Essential Winter Fruits

The Avant Gardener, January 2009

The spectacular fruits of evergreen and deciduous hollies, many viburnums and cotoneasters, and mountain ashes and crabapples are great contributors to late fall and winter garden beauty (and they supply life-saving forage for wildlife in the cold and stormy season).

With growing interest in “off season” garden attractions, many other plants are being advertised for their colorful fruits. The very new ‘Mystical’ series of hypericums is praised more for its yellow, red or purple fruits than for its lavish summer flowers. The beautyberries have only recently been recognized for their fine fruit displays; *Callicarpa bodinieri* ‘Profusion’ bears great amethyst to violet fruits.

Pyracanthas are fabulous fruiting plants, especially when espaliered on walls (but they suffer diseases in areas of high humidity, and need shelter from winter winds and sun to prevent desiccation). More adaptable (zones 2 to 7), is the native snowberry, *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*, notable for clusters of purple-red berries along arching stems.

Euonymus europaeus ‘Red Cascade’ is an increasingly popular small tree which bears striking orange fruits emerging from red capsules. Sapphireberry (*symplocos paniculata*) is treasured for its blue fruits, chokeberries (*Aronia*) for near-black fruit, and shrub and vine honeysuckles (*Lonicera*) for berries in several colors. And for common aggregate fruits (tight clusters of many tiny fruits) magnolias are eye-catchers, as are the huge green fruits of the osage orange (*maclura pomifera*).

Among others that bear unusual fruits are jetbead (*Rhodotypos scandens*, black fruits), *Clerodendrum trichototum* and *Mahonia aquifolium* (blue fruits), and species of *Myrica* (grey and waxy). And as a reader reminds us, no rose outdoes the native *Rosa Virginiana* for very big and long lasting red hips combined with bright winter twigs.