

by Marion McNew, Mount Hood Gardens

Glorious Fall Color

Late October makes *fall mums*, *Stewartia* and *Dwarf Dogwood* shine.



A fiery-red *Burning Bush* hedge (*Euonymus alatus* 'Compacta') snakes its way through this garden overlooking the Columbia River in mid October



Ornamental grasses are at their peak in mid October, here at Second Street Pocket Park in Downtown Hood River.



The front landscape at Willow Ponds in West Hood River displays vivid fall color in late October. In front the rose hips of *Rosa rugosa* 'Wild Spice'. The flaming orange grass is *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Purpurascens', *Flame Grass*, which is green with a reddish hue during the summer.



Early winter can be colorful in the garden: Here *Malus* 'Zumi Calicarpa' *Crabapple* and the plumes of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Variegatus', *Variegated Maiden Grass*. Columnar 'Degroot's Spire' *Arborvitae* furnishes evergreen color and structure.

Autumn is but a fleeting moment, and begs to be savored, before it gives way to winter's storms.

Still, memories of its vibrant colors and magic light will linger on.

—Marion McNew

Is your garden gorgeous in the spring, moderately colorful during the summer and uninspiring by early fall? Are you dreaming of year-round interest in your garden? We all easily envision vibrant red, orange and yellow leaf colors when nights and mornings turn crisp and days are getting shorter, however, there are also countless shrubs and perennials that shine in late summer and during fall. A sampling of them is described below.

I have always felt that the later season in the garden does not get the attention it deserves. My mission has long been to introduce gardeners and clients to the world of late-blooming plants. Not only is autumn a great time to plant, your garden can also be just as interesting and fresh-looking in the fall as it does in spring. Perennial Asters, Ornamental Grasses, Showy Stonecrop and Blue Mist Shrub all are in their prime now and throughout the fall.

Autumn is a great time to assess your garden and take note of empty spaces or tired combinations. When planting, you want to first thoroughly amend your soil in the area(s) you are planting, incorporating organic matter such as compost, and organic fertilizer. Mulch your newly-planted plants with a thin layer of fine, decomposed bark to minimize thawing and freezing of the soil during winter and to repress weed growth.

For greatest impact, plant in groups or sweeps and repeat certain plants throughout your garden or border. A grouping of three to five plants of the same cultivar, or individual plants repeated several times in the same vicinity, will give you a much showier arrangement than one lonely little specimen.

The lists on the following pages will provide you with some ideas of plants to explore.

SHRUBS & SMALL TREES WITH FALL INTEREST FOR LIGHT TO PARTIAL SHADE (woodland garden, or north and east exposure):	
Acer japonicum 'Acontifolium' <i>Fernleaf Fullmoon Maple</i>	Choice small specimen tree with large, bright green, deeply cut foliage. Grows to 15–20 ft. with equal spread. Flaming red, orange and yellow fall color.
Acer palmatum 'Fireglow' <i>Fireglow Japanese Maple</i>	Glowing, cherry-red fall color and a moderate growth habit to 12 ft. Very hardy, will tolerate sun.
Acer palmatum 'Sherwood Flame' <i>Sherwood Flame Japanese Maple</i>	Small tree forming a rounded, well-branched silhouette, to 15 ft. The burgundy foliage retains its color throughout the summer, turning bright red in the fall. More heat-tolerant than most Japanese Maples.
Cornus kousa 'Satomi' <i>Pink Korean Dogwood</i>	Korean Dogwoods bloom later than their better-known cousins, but are much hardier and more disease-resistant. The rose-pink flowers persist for several weeks in very late spring and early summer, followed by red fruit. Matures at 20 ft. Beautiful warm red fall color.
Enkianthus campanulatus 'Red Bells' <i>Redvein Enkianthus</i>	An interesting woodland or shade border shrub, growing to 6–10 ft. The deep red, nodding bell-shaped flowers are endearing and long-lasting. Deep red fall color is an added bonus. Needs moist soil with a high organic content.
Fothergilla gardenii <i>Dwarf Fothergilla</i>	Wonderful small shrub with fragrant white, bottle-brush flowers in spring. The foliage displays magnificent, vivid hues of orange and scarlet in the fall. Grows to 3 ft., taller if well-sited. Prefers moist, acid soil.
Hydrangea quercifolia 'Snow Queen' <i>Snow Queen Oakleaf Hydrangea</i>	Oakleaf Hydrangeas are shrubs with all-season interest: Corky bark, handsome, large foliage resembling Pin Oaks, showy, creamy white flowers and vivid, purple-red fall color. They are a little slow to get established, but will grow to 6 ft. in time with equal spread. 'Snow Queen' has especially large flower clusters. 'Sikes Dwarf' is a smaller cultivar only reaching 3 feet in height.
Oxydendron arboreum 'Chameleon' <i>Sourwood</i>	An unusual specimen tree with fragrant, dangling white flower panicles in summer. Best protected from hot afternoon sun. The large, lustrous green foliage takes on a stunning, warm red hue in the fall. Prefers acid, moist, well-drained soil. Perfect in combination with Hydrangea quercifolia.
Viburnum bodnantense 'Dawn' <i>Dawn Viburnum</i>	Fragrant pink flowers in clusters in late winter and early spring. Upright growth to 10 ft. The dark green, deeply veined foliage turns a scarlet purple in the fall. Quite adaptable. Makes a great deciduous screen or background plant and prefers light shade.
Viburnum plicatum 'Pink Beauty' <i>Pink Doublefile Snowball</i>	Viburnums are a diverse genus with many garden-worthy plants. 'Pink Beauty' has long-lasting pink flower clusters maturing into small, bright red berries. It can reach 6–10 ft. with wider spread once mature. Bright red fall color.

PERENNIALS WITH FALL INTEREST FOR LIGHT TO PARTIAL SHADE (woodland garden, or north and east exposure):	
Anemone hybrida 'Honorine Jobert' <i>White-flowering Japanese Anemone</i>	This shade-loving fall bloomer can form larger colonies in time. Graceful, pure white, single flowers with golden centers on 3–4 ft. branching stems. Puts on a bright show for many weeks, perfect in groupings in front of tall shrubs or under high-branching trees.
Cimicifuga (Actaea) ramosa 'Brunette' <i>Black Snakeroot</i>	Fragrant, white flower spikes in early fall form a striking contrast to the nearly black foliage. To 4 ft. 'Hillside Black Beauty' is even more choice, with stunning, purple-black foliage and a little taller habit. Likes consistent moisture.
Epimedium versicolor 'Sulphureum' <i>Yellow Barrenwort</i>	Choice shade perennial, forms a dense, 10–12 in. high ground cover in time, which allows for very little weed growth once established. The light yellow flowers in early spring resemble Columbines. Good orange-red fall color.
Geranium cantabrigiense 'Biokovo' <i>Biokovo Hardy Geranium</i>	Many Hardy Geraniums display fall color with their foliage. 'Biokovo' is a low, small-space ground cover delighting with showy, very light pink flowers in late spring and early summer. The scented foliage remains attractive during the summer and turns orange-red in the fall.
Grass: Carex morrowii 'Evergold' (<i>'Aureo-Variegata'</i>) <i>Variegated Japanese Sedge</i>	Green and gold striped leaves form arching clumps to 15 in. high. Great massing or edging plant for light to partial shade. Keeps its attractive, bright foliage all winter. Cut back in mid spring.



Caryopteris 'Blue Mist', Blue Mist Shrub



Sedum 'Carmen'



Sedum 'Autumn Fire'

SHRUBS & SMALL TREES WITH FALL INTEREST FOR SUNNY LOCATIONS:	
Berberis thunbergii 'Bagatelle' <i>Bagatelle Red Japanese Barberry</i>	A more compact form than the well-known 'Crimson Pigmy', this dwarf cultivar also has larger, glossier leaves. The vivid, burgundy-red foliage turns bright red in the fall. Small red berries. Great in the mixed border or as a low edging plant. 'Concorde' is a new, rich purple-leafed, globe-shaped cultivar, to 2 ft. Makes a nice low hedge.
Berberis thunbergii 'Helmond Pillar' <i>Columnar Barberry</i>	Columnar, vertical plants are an asset in the border or as a narrow, deciduous screen or hedge. 'Helmond Pillar' is suitable for all of these functions and is also a nice specimen plant. It grows to 5 ft. tall and 2 ft. wide and retains its burgundy-red foliage color all season, turning a rich red hue in the fall. In the winter, small red berries persist on the plant. It does have some thorns, but not vicious ones.
Calluna vulgaris 'Wickwar Flame' <i>Scotch Heather</i>	Beautiful copper-gold summer foliage turns a spectacular orange-red color in winter. The lavender flowers in summer are fairly inconspicuous. Compact, mounded growth to 2 ft., takes well to shearing. This plant is stunning where happy, needs good drainage. Erica vivellii , Winter Heath, has dark green foliage and eye-catching, bright carmine flowers all winter into early spring. It can take partial shade.
Caryopteris x clandonensis 'Blue Mist' <i>Blue Mist Shrub</i>	Small shrub with silvery foliage and bright blue flowers in a range of blue or lavender hues in early fall. Loved by honey bees. Great in the shrub or perennial border. Requires excellent drainage. Cut back hard in the spring. 'Dark Knight' has more intense blue flowers, to 3 ft.
Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire' ('Winter Flame') <i>'Midwinter Fire' Redtwig Dogwood</i>	Redtwig Dogwoods are prized for winter interest with their bright red or orange stems. 'Midwinter Fire' reaches 8–10 ft. and has yellow-green foliage. The stems display stunning, orange-red hues in winter. Use for natural plantings, stream banks or as a screen. Will take part shade. Cornus alba 'Elegantissima' sports sage green foliage with a creamy border and dark red stems in winter.
Cotinus coggygria 'Royal Purple' <i>Purple Smoke Tree</i>	Purple Smoke Trees are great as a small tree or large shrub in the perennial or shrub border. They can reach 15 ft. and their rich purple-maroon foliage forms a nice contrast to lighter flower colors and green-leafed plants. Reddish-orange fall color. The pink powder-puff flowers in summer are quite striking.
Euonymus alatus 'Compacta' <i>Compact Burning Bush</i>	Burning Bushes are popular for their bright red fall color. The fresh green foliage and corky bark showing in winter are some of their many assets. They respond well to pruning and can be used as a medium-high hedge or screen. The leaves may burn in hot afternoon sun or with overly dry soil. 'Compacta' grows to 6–8 ft. without shearing, newer 'Fireball' is a more compact 4–5 ft. As a low to medium hedge, space 4 ft. apart, 'Fire Ball' possibly a little closer.
Rosa rugosa 'Wild Spice' <i>Shrub Rose, Rugosa Rose</i>	Rugosa Roses can grow quite large in time, but 'Wild Spice' only reaches 4–5 ft. and can be kept lower. The highly fragrant, pure white flowers with golden stamens appear throughout the summer. Large orange rose hips form if flowers are not dead-headed. They persist into winter. The foliage turns bright yellow in the fall. 'Wildberry Breeze' has rosy-purple flowers.
Spiraea betulifolia 'Tor' <i>Birchleaf Spiraea</i>	Compact cultivar with a mounding, 2–3 ft. habit and white flowers in late spring, early summer. Brilliant orange-red fall color.
Spiraea japonica 'Firelight' <i>Firelight Japanese Spiraea</i>	'Firelight' is an improved 'Goldflame' cultivar, with a compact, 2–3 ft. habit. It has a glorious, orange-red spring color, turning less vibrant during the summer. The fall color is a stunning, bright scarlet red. Pink flowers. Shear after flowering. Spiraea x bumalda 'Froebelii' is taller, to 4 ft., with greenish-red foliage and an arching, slender habit. Pink flowers. Foliage turns hues of gold, orange and red in fall.
Vaccinium 'Bluecrop' <i>Highbush Blueberry</i>	Blueberries are not only edible and delicious, they also can be attractive ornamental plants. 'Bluecrop' produces large, tasty berries in mid summer and is popular and reliable. Its foliage turns a bright crimson in the fall. For best pollination plant two different cultivars. 'Earliblue' fruits in very early summer. 'Toro' is a more compact, newer cultivar reaching 3 to 4 ft. in height. Attractive, pink flowers in spring. Produces huge, sweet berries. Bright red fall color.
Vitis vinifera 'Purpurea' <i>Purple-leafed Climbing Grape</i>	Choice climber with burgundy-green leaves changing to bright scarlet in fall. Sweet, small edible grapes in tight clusters. To 20 ft., great for covering arbors or trellis screens. Vigorous once established, but not invasive.



Anemone x hybrida 'Honorine Jobert'



Aster frikartii 'Moench'



Muhlenbergia capillaris, Hairy Awn Muhley

PERENNIALS WITH FALL INTEREST FOR SUNNY LOCATIONS:	
Aster frikartii 'Mönch' <i>Frikarti Aster</i>	Lavender-blue, daisy-like flowers appear all summer into fall. Mature height 2.5 ft. by 2 ft. Needs good drainage. One of the best perennials.
Aster lateriflorus 'Prince' <i>Calico Aster</i>	This aster produces an abundance of small white & plum flowers in mid fall above purple red, fine foliage. Grows to 2–2.5 ft. The foliage forms a nice contrast to lighter flowers and bright green leaf colors.
Aster novae-angliae 'Purple Dome' <i>'Purple Dome' New England Aster</i>	'Purple Dome' Aster is one of the most stunning cultivars, producing large, satiny purple flower for six weeks, starting in early fall. It can get quite substantial, to 2 or 2.5 ft. tall with equal spread. Aster novae-belgii 'Alert' is lower and delights with sparkling, crimson-red flowers over many weeks in the fall.
Aster pringlei 'Monte Cassino' <i>Monte Cassino Aster</i>	Clouds of showy, small white flowers appear in very late fall on gracefully arching 4 ft. stems. Good background perennial and a superb cut flower.
Cerastigma plumbaginoides <i>Plumbago</i>	A slowly spreading, low ground cover. Will tolerate fairly dry soil. Assets are bright blue flowers in mid autumn and orange-red foliage fall color. Emerges late in the spring. Can become quite vigorous in time. Great under shrub roses.
Paeonia 'Kansas' <i>'Kansas' Peony</i>	One doesn't think of peonies for fall interest, but 'Kansas' retains good foliage all summer, turning a purplish hue in the fall. The attractive, carmine-red double flowers appear in early summer on strong, 3 ft. stems. Needs no staking and is very disease-resistant.
Rudbeckia nitida 'Herbstsonne' ('Autumn Sun') <i>'Autumn Sun' Black-eyed Susan</i>	This excellent, impressive cultivar starts flowering in mid summer and continues into fall. Clear lemon-yellow flowers with a green center cone appear on up to 6 ft., branched stems. Give it 3 ft. of space and sit back and admire. Good cut flower. Combines well with Ornamental Grasses or use as a tall background perennial in the border. Rudbeckia subtomentosa 'Henry Eilers' is a new, promising cultivar with brilliant yellow, starburst flowers, to 5 ft.
Sedum 'Autumn Fire' <i>Showy Stonecrop</i>	Showy Stonecrops have succulent, upright foliage and flowers resembling broccoli. They are quite drought-tolerant once established. 'Autumn Fire' is a newer cultivar with large, rosy-red flowers in early fall and especially strong stems. Grows to 2.5 ft. and can become quite substantial within a few years. 'Carmen' has vibrant pink flowers and 'Star Dust' white ones and lighter green foliage. There are also cultivars with purple foliage and red flowers, such as 'Purple Emperor' and the promising 'Red Cauli' .
Sempervivum arachnoideum var. cebenese <i>Spiderweb Hen & Chicks</i>	Hen & Chicks come in a myriad of colors and sizes. Their succulent rosettes make them very <i>drought</i> -tolerant. They are great in the rock garden, in small borders and planters in full sun. They dislike wet, poorly drained soil. Many are evergreen, providing attractive year-round color, even in winter. Sempervivum arachnoideum var. cebenese has small silvery rosettes with copious, web-like hairs. Jovibarba allionii has particularly bright green leaves with red tips.

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES: <i>Ornamental Grasses are an essential plant group for fall interest and are low-maintenance. Most of them flower in early to mid autumn and several also display good foliage fall color. The ornamental grasses mentioned are quite drought-tolerant once established. All the ones included are hardy in the Mid Columbia and are not invasive.</i>	
Miscanthus sinensis 'Adagio' <i>Dwarf Maiden Grass</i>	Showy, creamy-white flowers on a sturdy, 3 ft. plant appear in early fall. This is one of the more compact grasses. A strong grower, use as specimen or low background screen.
Miscanthus sinensis 'Dixieland' <i>Compact Variegated Maiden Grass</i>	Variegated grasses really light up the border. 'Dixieland' is a new, more compact cultivar than the straight 'Variegatus' and displays a graceful habit growing to 5 ft. Showy, silky pink plumes in early fall. The white and green striped foliage takes on some pinkish hues in the fall. Gorgeous!
Miscanthus sinensis 'Gold Bar' (PP#15193) <i>Dwarf Porcupine Grass</i>	Another new variegated cultivar, this one with green leaves banded with golden yellow. It is very compact and strictly upright, to 3–4 ft., furnishing a vertical accent in the border or combined with other grasses. Short, burgundy plumes in fall.
Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light' <i>Silver Maiden Grass</i>	One of Marion's all-time favorites, the fine, sage-green blades with a silvery midrib really shine all summer and fall. Very graceful. Reddish-bronze plumes in mid to late fall. Grows to 4–5 ft. or more with a 2–2.5 ft. spread.
Miscanthus sinensis var. purpurascens <i>Flame Grass</i>	Broad, bright green foliage with a reddish hue turns a stunning, reddish-orange color in October. Silky white flower plumes are a great complement and can reach 4-5 ft. Can take some shade and moister soil.
Miscanthus sinensis 'Silberfeder' ('Silver Feather') <i>Maiden Grass</i>	Majestic grass with large, showy white plumes in mid to late fall. They persist well for most of the winter. The sturdy green blades display a silvery midriff. Can grow to 6–9 ft. It is a clumper, expanding slowly, but is not invasive.
Muhlenbergia capillaris <i>Hairy Awn Muhley</i>	Clouds of eye-catching, purple-pink flowers surprise in mid to late fall. The rather non-descript foliage does not give indication of the magic ahead. Flowers are long-lasting, to 3 ft. tall and a good cut flower. Needs good drainage.
Panicum virgatum 'Shenandoah' <i>Shenandoah Switch Grass</i>	A beautiful cultivar with bright green, red-tinged foliage in summer, to 3 ft. Bright red fall color. Clouds of bronze-red flower panicles appearing in late summer add an airy flair. Will grow in partial shade and tolerates moister soil, but is not as drought-tolerant as other grasses.
Pennisetum alopecuroides 'Cassian' <i>Improved Dwarf Fountain Grass</i>	Fountain Grasses have fluffy, bronze copper flower spikes resembling a bottlebrush. 'Cassian' has bright green foliage and blooms in early to mid fall with long-lasting flowers on up to 3 ft. stems. The orange-red fall color is an added bonus. 'Hameln' is a well-known cultivar with earlier flowers and a golden fall color.