

# Featured Plants

The Landscape Committee periodically reviews the Approved Plant List for potential additions. In this article I'd like to include some of newer plants we added and also some lesser used plants you might want to try. There are no guarantees on some of these because I have not tried some of them. I selected at least one plant from each category with the exception of bulbs.

## Evergreen Tree - Japanese black Pine 'Banshoshō'

Japanese black pine Banshoshō displays interesting character (a specimen pine) and some of its larger black pine cousins have been used in Albuquerque medians. Banshoshō is a smaller tree at 3-5' tall and wide. This pine might be used in place of the taller mugo pines. It is a medium water user and like all trees prefers a chipped bark mulch. It provides evergreen color over the winter.

## Deciduous Tree - Royal Raindrops® Crabapple

This is the only crabapple tree currently on the list because fruit trees often attract bears and can definitely be messy. The fruit from this crabapple looks like raindrops, very small. This makes it less messy. The tree grows to about 20' tall with a spread of 15'. The foliage is purple and cutleaf. Fall color is orange red; spring bloom is magenta pink; the fruit is red, 1/4" in diameter and persists over winter. This variety has good disease resistance and is heat/drought tolerant. It's a tree for all seasons.

An alternate choice for a deciduous tree is the Mesa Glow maple discovered by an NMSU professor.

## Evergreen Shrub - Curry Plant

*Helichrysum italicum* (formerly *H. angustifolium*) has been on the list for a long time but has not been used extensively. Curry plant has ever-gray thin leafed foliage with a bright yellow bloom. It is native to Turkey so likes to be watered at least once a month during the winter. The plant smells like the spice blend called curry which may be how it got its common name. Rubbing the leaves and smelling your hands is part of what makes this plant fun for kids (and adults)! The flower heads dry to a muted yellow. I have this plant on the west side of my driveway and it really holds up well in the heat. When there's some moisture in the air you can smell the foliage without rubbing your hands in it. The height is 2' and it is a water conserving mounding plant.

## Deciduous Shrub – Petite Plum® Dwarf Butterfly Bush

Unlike most "dwarf" butterfly bushes at a height of 4-6' this one actually is closer to a reasonably sized shrub and it grows in a more compact shape. Petite Plum is a showy, summer blooming shrub which bears reddish purple, fragrant blooms. It has gray-green foliage, attracts hummingbirds and butterflies, and is a moderate water user. The size, bloom color, and pollinator attractant are what makes this shrub a featured selection.

## Perennials – Kannah Creek® Sulfur Buckwheat

I love several of the buckwheats (especially the *Jamesii*) and am trying this one out now, partially because it's a Plant Select® choice and I like to try their plants. Plant Select® is an organization in Colorado that promotes plants that do well in western gardens. The Kannah Creek® variety is known for its masses of yellow flowers rising on thin but sturdy stems. It has a low mat of foliage that turns in the fall from bright green to a vivid purple-red which lasts over winter. The flowers make a great dried

bouquet. It is 12-15" tall by 12-24" wide, blooms from May to July, likes full sun to part shade, and is a moderate to xeric water user.

### Perennials – Ornamental Oreganos

Ornamental oreganos are my new favorite flower and I have three different varieties of this mounding full sun plant. Whenever my garden is on tour these are the plants that seem to attract visitors the most. All of the oreganos draw in butterflies and bees, are deer resistant, have fragrant flowers with extended bloom. My favorite of the three is Amethyst Falls a dark purple drooping bloom, second favorite is cascading on my herb spiral with lantern-like yellow blooms, and the third favorite is Hopleys with a purple raceme-like bloom. I notice the variety Rotkugel looks like Hopleys and may be more available. The height is 15" with spread to 18". They bloom in late spring to summer however even when they are no longer blooming, the seed heads are colored or at least interesting. They are drought resistant, moderate to xeric water users, bee friendly, and deer/rabbit resistant. I like the evergreen mat of foliage during winter and the dried colored seed heads. It prefers our native soil.

### Groundcovers – Kinnikinnick or Bearberry

Bearberry, in the manzanita family, is a native green carpet of glossy dark leaves with small waxy pinkish flowers and brilliant red berries. It is an under tree shade plant. Adding plants under a tree helps to provide additional water for the tree. Bearberry is a star in the winter palette with its dark foliage and red berries loved by songbirds. Like trees, bearberry prefers organic mulch and enriched soil.

### Vines – Major Wheeler Coral Honeysuckle

Unlike the Japanese honeysuckle this one is less rampant, but also less fragrant. Major Wheeler has coral colored cluster blooms, is long blooming and a hummingbird magnet native variety. Although it is advertised as full sun, I believe the roots need to be shaded to keep the leaf margins from browning. It blooms from late spring into summer, grows 6-8' tall x 5-10' wide, and is a moderate water user. On a trellis this deciduous vine is stunning. And finally, it's low maintenance just needing occasional light pruning to shape.

### Ornamental Grass – Karley Rose Oriental Fountain Grass

This is a new variety we're just experimenting with in the common area. Unfortunately, it appears to be very tasty to rabbits. Most fountain grasses are not cold tolerant, but Karley Rose is supposed to grow into zone 5 (two zones colder than us). Karley Rose is graceful, upright, has smoky rose-purple flower spikes that glow with the sun behind them, and has more cold tolerance than most fountain grasses. It grows from 3-4' tall, blooms dusty rose in spikes from summer to fall, and is a moderate water user. It's a warm season grass so cut the foliage to the ground once you see new green shoots begin to grow.

### Desert Accents – White Sands Hedgehog Cactus

There are great places to use desert accent plants, which need less water than most plants. The White Sands variety of hedgehog cactus is heart-stopping when placed by a moss rock boulder and blooming with its scarlet flowers in late spring. It is taller than most hedgehog cactus at 15-24" tall and spreads to about the same size. Under favorable conditions it may grow to 36". Grown in clusters it is a stoutly-spined drought resistant/drought tolerant plant. Great where you want a plant, but don't have irrigation. Always consider the spines when placing in your landscape.

I hope this month's column challenges you to try something new or different. That's part of the fun of gardening and keep a xeriscape colorful, not a hot **zeroscape** with limited colorful or interesting plants.