

Add Color to the Landscape

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Photo by David W. Marshall: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (*Brunfelsia* spp.) is a perennial shrub in bloom now in the demonstration garden at the University of Florida IFAS Leon County Extension demonstration garden at 615 Paul Russell Road. Learn more about this and other colorful plants Saturday at 10 a.m. at Esposito Garden Center.

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When I'm doing landscape consultations, one of the most common things I hear from clientele is, "I would like something that has color, if not all year, at least for part of the year." So Saturday, April 26, at 10 a.m., at Esposito Garden Center, I will be giving a free presentation about plants that can give you color in your landscape.

We have few plants, if any, that will bloom year-round here. But we do have many plants that will bloom much longer than the brief two to three weeks that many of our azaleas bloom. That's one reason the loropetalums have become so popular. Their bloom period is a month or more in the spring. The white-blooming 'Emerald Snow' loropetalum even blooms repeatedly after spring. In fact, plant growers are always looking for plants that flower for longer periods or repeatedly. Examples that have come to market are the 'Endless Summer' hydrangeas, the 'Encore' azaleas, and the 'Jubilation' gardenia. Long bloom periods make a plant much more attractive to customers.

We also have many plants that have colorful foliage, giving us color for much longer than most flowers. Names like 'Purple Pixie' loropetalum, 'Kaleidoscope' abelia, 'Firepower' and 'Blush Pink' nandina, 'Grey Owl' juniper, 'Mr. Goldstrike' aucuba, and 'Silver Saw' palmetto refer to foliage color of these plants.

As we're trying to add color to the landscape, it's helpful to remember that green is a color too, and that there are different shades of green that can be used in the landscape to create interest. There's the light green foliage of sweet viburnum as opposed to the dark green of sago palm or cleyera or podocarpus. There's the dark green 'Emerald Goddess' giant liriopse and the lighter green, variegated leaves of Aztec grass. There are

variegated plants such as variegated shell ginger, variegated ligustrum, and 'Twist of Pink' variegated oleander.

Most of the plants I've mentioned so far are permanent, woody perennial plants in our area. But if you're willing to plant some perennials that die back during the winter and return in spring, you can greatly expand your color palette. And many of these perennials will bloom from late spring until the first hard freeze of the winter, which often doesn't come until December or January. Firebush, *Tecoma stans* or yellowbells, and *Thunbergia battiscombei* (scrambling skyflower) are three very reliable perennials for a sunny site.

If you're willing to plant some annuals, plants that won't overwinter here, then you expand the palette of possibilities even further. Coleus, alternanthera, crotons, Sunpatiens, and 'Summer Wave' torenia may not overwinter here. But they can still give you color from the time you plant them in spring until the next winter. That's a lot of bang for the buck!

Even after we've had our first winter freeze here, we have hollies with colorful berries, camellia flowers, and beds of pansies to give us winter color. In January to February the bloom cycle of trees like red maple, Taiwan cherry, and redbud starts again. So even though no one plant will give you color year-round, there's no excuse not to have year-round garden color in Tallahassee.

Plan to come learn more from me about how you can add color now to your landscape, Saturday at 10:00 a.m. at Esposito Garden Center.

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