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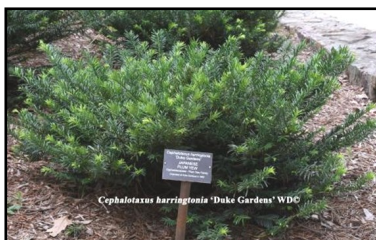
A Gardener's Wish List

By Jean Wolph, SMG Member

Cephalotaxus harringtonia: 'Duke Gardens' Plum Yew

I've heard that folks either love yews or hate them. I confess to finding this dichotomy surprising - what's not to love about glossy, deep green foliage that's soft, dense, and easy to grow? Yews were, in fact, the go-to foundational landscaping shrub when I was growing up...gracious, though...that was 60 years ago. I hardly ever see them anymore; maybe people got tired of them or yanked them out when they became leggy.

Yews are pretty forgiving, however; like most shrubs, trimming up to a third of the plant each year will keep them looking neat.



2017 Theodore Klein Award
Winner - young specimen

Having moved to a neighborhood where deer roam freely and recently treated themselves to \$50 worth of my pansies, I was especially interested to learn that yews are prized for being deer resistant. Education Committee Chair Jane Jones hated to burst my bubble, but shared that deer destroyed her yews. "But maybe that was a different variety," she noted.

If, like me, you're ready to give yews a chance, consider 'Duke Gardens', a Plum Yew which won the 2017 Theodore Klein Plant Award. Duke Gardens has the compact growth yews are known for, with needles that retain their color all year. It will tolerate a wide range of soils, will grow in full sun or part shade, and has few pests. This variety typically reaches 30 inches in height and spreads 3-4 feet, but the original plant in Duke Gardens, Durham, NC, is actually 8 feet tall (so don't forget about that pruning). Researchers at UK note that plum yews have been known to survive temperatures of -24 degrees, which means Duke Gardens should certainly survive Kentuckiana winters.

According to the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office, yews are typically very hardy plants, and are not susceptible to many diseases.

However, several stress factors can cause yews to turn brown:

- "Wet feet" - too much water can lead to root problems.
- Too little water - although yews are relatively drought-tolerant, too little water can lead to browning of foliage.
- Winter damage - rapidly changing temperatures during the winter, bright sunshine, and inadequate water reserves in the root system can cause browning, often on the south and west sides of the plant. If buds remain green, though, yews may recover.
- De-icing salts used on roadways and sidewalks - so avoid planting in areas that will be treated.
- Wounds to the bark - since yews are not very tolerant of wounding, don't mow or weed-eat too close.

When yews turn brown, Christine Engelbrecht, Department of Plant Pathology at Iowa State, says not to prune out the brown tissue immediately in case the branch tips are still viable. "When planted in a proper site and cared for, yews can be a valuable addition to the landscape."



***Quercus coccinea*: 'Scarlet Oak' Tree**

The scarlet oak, first scientifically recorded in 1691, is recommended as a low-maintenance, long-lived shade tree or "street tree" because of its size (50-70 feet tall and 40-50 feet wide), its propensity to grow quickly - even in dry, acidic, sandy soils - as well as for its lovely straight trunk, and, of course, its dramatic fall color. It is the official tree of Washington, D.C. (didn't you imagine DC would have picked

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the flowering cherry, given all the hype that the National Cherry Blossom Festival gets?) and is native to the Eastern United States, at least from Appalachia to Missouri, south to Mississippi and north to southern Indiana. Other sources say north to Southern Canada and south to Florida.

In choosing a location for your scarlet oak, which is also known as one of the easier trees to transplant, consider an open space that gets at least 6 hours of direct sunlight every day. The only kind of soil it abhors is alkaline. Scarlet oaks are tolerant of wet and poorly drained soils but also are very able to withstand drought once established - and, interestingly, are tolerant of the black walnut, which is lethal to so many other species. They sport yellow-green blooms in April and May, but neither the male or female flowers are particularly showy. One of the advantages of the scarlet oak over the pin oak is that it's less susceptible to disease and pests.

Leaves are glossy green in summer, about 3-6" long and deeply cut with bristle-tipped, pointed lobes. The fall foliage hangs on for weeks and weeks, sometimes till the first snow. Scarlet oaks produce small acorns (1/2" to 1" long). For some

reason, every 3-5 years, scarlet oaks produce a bumper crop of them. The acorns are an important source of food for larger songbirds as well as wild turkeys, grouse, squirrels and deer.

Maybe I'll plant a scarlet oak and see if the deer will leave my pansies alone.

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