Planting Shrubs and Lawns

By George A. Beach

The materials of ornamental horticulture include half a dozen different groups of plants, lawn, trees, shrubs, vines, perennials, and annuals. Lawns should come first, followed by trees, then shrubs and vines, with the flowering plants added later.

There are almost as many ways to use ornamental plants as there are uses of them, but some systems are much better adapted to certain places than others. First of all, lawns should be so arranged as to provide broad, open spaces. Shrubs and flower beds spotted around over such an area break up its broad, open expanse. There is seldom enough of such broad, open lawn in our home grounds. Preparing the ground properly for lawns is a good preparation also for other ornamentals. Whatever grading it is necessary to do should be done before trees, shrubs, or flowers are planted so that the lawn is a natural forerunner of other plantings.

Someone has said that lawn is the canvas on which the landscape picture is painted. Trees should come next in this picture, as they are the largest item, except the house. Next in order are shrubs and flower beds. We usually think of trees as separate items and space them apart accordingly, but some trees look well in groups. Evergreens make a very useful and pleasing group when planted fairly closely. A very tall hedge can be made with such trees as Lombardy and Bolleman poplar at 4 to 6 feet spacing. But we must continue to use trees as single specimens in a good many places for shade or ornament, or for both.
While grouping is not strange to the use of trees, it is the usual procedure in planting shrubs. Wherever shrub groups are large enough, it is best to plant several of a kind together, 3, 5, or 7 shrubs of a kind together, followed next in the same group by a similar number of a different shrub make a much better appearance in the finished planting than does a jumbled assortment of the two kinds where bushes are alternated rather than grouped.

The first thing most of us think of in selecting ornamentals is the kind of bloom they have. This is natural enough, since the word, ornamental, suggests bloom and fruit. As a matter of fact, however, most of our ornamental plants are in bloom for only a few weeks during the year, while we must put up with their foliage and other characteristics for all the rest of the year. It seems logical, then, that we should select our ornamentals by giving greater consideration to the shape, size, color, and texture than we give to the bloom. Of course, the bloom is not to be neglected entirely; and with some things, we will probably continue to tolerate a foliage and plant form that does not particularly please us simply because of the few weeks during a year when we may have the bloom. Where there is a possibility that flower colors may clash, they should be so arranged as to have some material with white flowers between the two colors under suspicion. White is the floral peace maker.

Not all the color in our plants, however, comes in their flowers. Some things have colored foliage, such as sumacs in autumn or the Red-Leaved Maple and Red-Leaved Barberry, all through the growing season. In others of the ornamentals, the bark color gives a pleasing winter effect, such as the bright red of the Red Dogwood and the golden yellow of the Golden-twig Dogwood. Fruits persist in such things as Snowberry, Coralberry, Barberry, and Cranberry bush during a part or all of the winter.
The mature size of a tree or bush should be carefully considered before it is planted. For places that do not afford room for large trees, there are small ones such as the flowering crabs. And there are plenty of small shrubs, so that windows and walks need not be overgrown by bushes that get too large.

Here are some of the things that are useful over most of our region:

Probably the best all-round shade tree is the American Elm. Its newer competitor, the Chinese or Siberian Elm, grows much more rapidly, but it apparently is not so good a permanent tree; and because of the tendency to hold its foliage late in the season, frequently is badly split by heavy snows. For these reasons, it will probably be of greater use in windbreaks and as a hedge plant than as a lawn or shade tree.

Hackberry is another of the elm family, which, though it is a slow grower, is a fine hardwood tree, and many prefer it even to American Elm.

Honeylocust is a fairly large tree with small leaves. This one is not subject to injury by the common locust borer which attacks the Black Locust. Nurseries have Honeylocust trees that are thornless. The thorny ones have enormous branched thorns over all the tree on trunk and branches alike. Honeylocust is drought resistant but grows faster when watered.

Linden is a good broad-leaved shade tree which is fragrant when in bloom. The more common one in our region is American Linden, sometimes known as Big-leaf Linden. There is another smaller leaved one called the Little-leaf or European.

Mountain Ash and Weeping Birch are particularly ornamental because of the fruits of the first and the bark of the other. Clusters of orange red berries are borne on Mountain Ash, while the bark of the Weeping Birch is white. The slender, gracefully pendulous twigs of birch also enhance its ornamental value.
To discuss just briefly a few of the outstanding shrubs for the region: Rocky Mountain Maple is a native plant which will make a small tree or a medium-to-large bush. Russian olive is a shrub which gives pleasing variety to masses of foliage because of its gray-green color. This plant is also desirable because of its spicy fragrance in early summer from blooms that are rather inconspicuous. It is drought resistant.

Among the first of the shrubs to put out any leaves in the spring are the Honeysuckles. This medium height bush can be had with white or pink flowers. Mockorange is a favorite which many remember by its old name Syringa. There are several kinds of Mockorange, some medium to tall, others about 4 feet. They bloom in June with white, scented flowers.

Sumac is a standard item among the medium-to-large plants, and there are also some smaller kinds. American Elder is a good medium-sized shrub, providing large clusters of small, white, flowers, and followed by berries which are especially attractive to birds. Golden Elder is a yellow-leaved form.

Hawthorn is available in several kinds, some of which are native to this region. This shrub is desirable for its shiny-green foliage, as well as the ornamental red fruits.

Hinckley is an interesting medium-high shrub, so named from the fact that its older stems peel off their bark in many thin layers giving the appearance of as many as nine layers showing at a time. It blooms in the spring with flowers like Spirea, though larger, and has foliage like large currant leaves.

Of the medium-to-small shrubs, probably Vanhoutte Spirea is the best of all. This is a fine textured shrub, very prolific in its bloom, of good graceful shape, and as hardy as most. Among the great number of other spireas, Garland, Froebel, and Anthony Waterer are also good.

Japanese Barberry is a good small, thorny bush which carries shiny red berries through the winter. (This is not an offender as is common
barberry in the spread of black stem rust of wheat). Red-leaved Barberry is a kind having bronzey-red foliage all through the growing season.

Snowberry can be had in several different kinds, one of which is native to this region. They have waxy, white fruits in clusters through fall and early winter and foliage and twigs quite similar to Vanhoutte Spirea, though the bush is smaller.

No discussion of shrubs would be complete without the mention of Lilac and Snowball, two long-time favorites. Endless variety is now available in lilacs, since there are many hybrids of both the common and the Persian types as well as French kinds.

Most people know Snowball, but many do not recognize its close relatives. The Snowball is a Viburnum, and there are a number of other good ornamentals among the Viburnums. The Highbush Cranberry or Cranberrybush, is one of these. Others are Blackhaw, Arrow-wood, and Wayfaring-tree.

Less well known than many, though a native of our higher altitudes, is a small bush called Shrubby Cinquefoil. This has a grey-green foliage and little, yellow roses borne all over the bush through most of the summer.

All the shrubs so far mentioned bloom in spring or early summer; but with sumac, barberry, and snowberry bloom is inconspicuous, so that formation of fruits in summer and fall provides display.

A shrub that will provide flowers late is Butterflybush, also known as Summer Lilac. It attracts butterflies, and its blooms are lilac-like. It blooms in the latter part of summer and the bush often dies down to the ground in winter.

We usually think of Privet as a hedge plant, but it is also useful when unclipped as a flowering shrub. Its small, white, scented flowers are followed by clusters of black berries.

There are a number of good perennial vines from which to choose in
this region. Clematis comes in several colors. There is a white one called Sweet Autumn Clematis, and one with large purple flowers known as Jackman. There also are red-flowered forms. A more recent addition to the list of vines is the Fleecevine. This one has large clusters of white flowers from midsummer on. Engelmann Ivy is a widely used climbing vine. It will cling and not require trellising even on quite smooth surfaces. The Dutchman's-pipe vine has large, heart-shaped, morning glory-like leaves and interesting though inconspicuous flowers. One of the best fall foliages among the vines that we have is grape.

The hardiest varieties need no winter protection; and though the fruit is small and sour, it is useful for jelly making. The foliage makes an excellent cover for fences, arbors, and such places.

Having painted a landscape picture with trees, shrubs, and vines, on a broad, green canvas of lawn, flowers can next be added with the assurance that background has been provided for their proper display.

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