



# The Art Of Breeding

Some plants are supremely adaptable. But do you know why? We unfold the mystery of breeding.



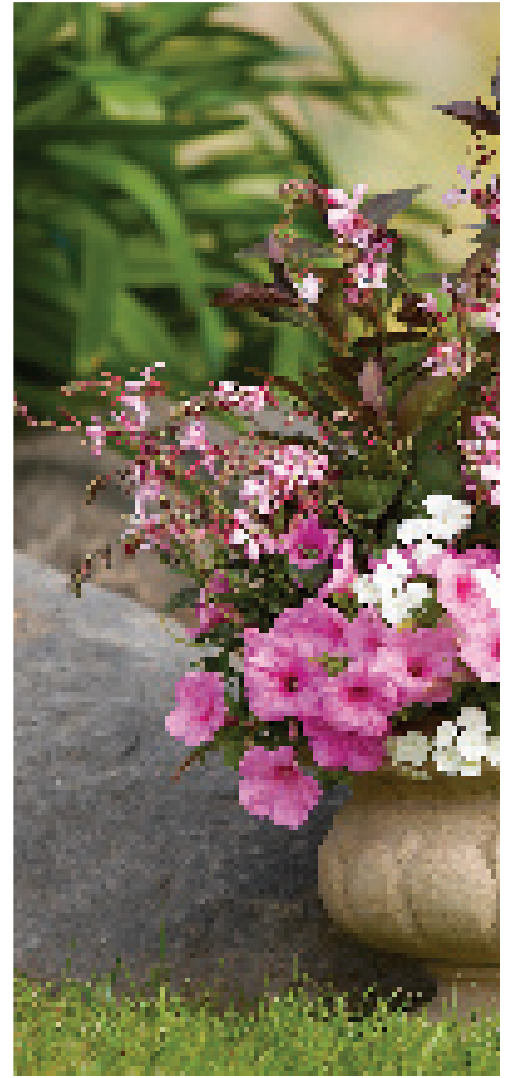
My Monet

My Monet breeder, Bert Verhoef of the Netherlands, was impressed with the success of friend Herman Geers' weigela introduction through Spring Meadow.

A customer walks into a garden center, searching for something that will last longer than the summer, looks good in multiple situations and has a zing that will stay attractive through most of the year. Is your first thought a flowering shrub? Why not?

"Primarily, our goal is to bring to market shrubs that are as colorful and attractive as annuals or perennials, that can be brought right to the front of the garden, but are easier to grow," says Tim Wood, product development manager at Spring Meadow Nursery. "We're looking for plants that are lower maintenance, because people aren't devoting the same amount of time to gardening. Shrubs are in a really good position in that respect."

It's Wood's job to work with breeders all over the world to try and meet a specific criteria Spring Meadow has set to cultivate new



introductions into the flowering shrub market. It starts with a relationship with a breeder, and that can be more important than any step in the process. "Success breeds success, especially in breeding plants," says Wood. "It gives breeders confidence to bring you more plants."

## A LONG PROCESS

Breeding doesn't just start and end with finding the right cultivar. Spring Meadow does internal breeding and taps a network of

## In The Spotlight



## Quick Fire

*Hydrangea paniculata 'Bulk'*

The first to bloom! Quick Fire was selected because it blooms about a month before other *Hydrangea paniculata* varieties. The flowers turn pink very quickly, and will be an extremely dark rosy-pink in the fall. Quick, easy to grow and trouble free, the flowers are not affected by soil pH. They are produced on new wood, and will bloom even after the harshest winters.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zones 4-9

**Bloom Time:** Mid-summer

**Bloom Color:** Rich, deep pink

**Foliage:** Green

**Size:** 6-8 feet tall at maturity; 3-5 feet wide

**Exposure:** Full sun to partial shade

**Soil:** Prefers good, loamy soil; most adaptable of all hydrangeas to different soil types.



*'Wine & Roses' weigela, pictured here in the mixed container, is the classic example of a flowering shrub's versatility.*

*'Wine & Roses' weigela*

breeders around the world to continue to find the most maintenance-free, striking plants they can. Sometimes cultivars come from new breeders who are looking to break into the market. Spring Meadow uses a trial garden on its site to accumulate every possible cultivar of a particular species of plant and assess its attributes. It already has a list of criteria outlined to narrow down which genetics will fit the bill.

The timetable to get a plant from beginning to retail shelf varies from three years to 10. "If (the breeder) has a plant and it meets a majority of our selection criteria, and the plant has been grown and evaluated ... it can be as little as three years," notes Wood. "If the breeder has one plant, not tested thoroughly, it could easily take up to 10 years."

Wood says he considers the work he does with breeders a "long-term relationship," that instills a level of trust with the breeder. "We have to put the needs of the breeder before

the needs of the nursery in many respects and do what's right by them. If we do that and we're successful, then the goal is they bring us a second plant or recommend us to another breeder."

### A TIMELESS CLASSIC

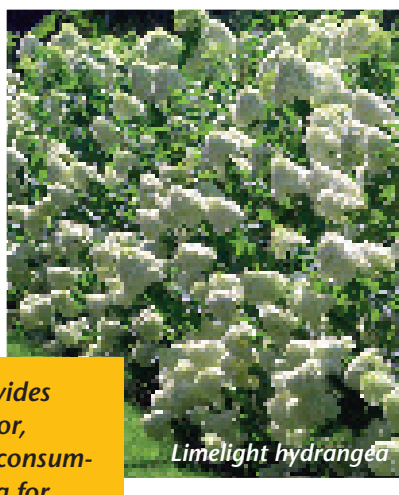
Because of the time it takes to get new shrub

varieties to the marketplace, shrub producers cannot create the quick turnaround on trends that say, the apparel industry is seeing now. That's not necessarily a bad thing, according to Wood.

"The industry can only digest so much on a regular basis," he says. "If you concentrate on the attributes of a particular plant ... to provide added value to growers and to the end consumer, even if a plant doesn't come to market as quickly as you'd like it to, it's going to have the attributes that will make it a success." The key is, the plant has to have the proper qualities that make it a timeless classic – foliage color that makes it attractive almost year-round, a habit that makes it versatile in the landscape, and a laid-back attitude that makes it easy in the garden.

### LISTENING TO THE END CONSUMER

Flowering shrub companies have created marketing campaigns to show end users how these plants fit in their gardens. For example, Wood says



*Limelight hydrangea*

*Limelight provides months of color, exactly what consumers are looking for.*

they realize customers are looking for success and color. "I don't think that it always matters if (success) comes from a weigela or spirea, as long as it provides color," he says. "Part of it is choosing the type of species you're working with – some plants are just naturally finicky and more difficult to grow. Other plants are more widely adaptable." ●

## Find Spring Meadow Nursery

Check out the following schedule to find Spring Meadow Nursery at your favorite trade show this winter:

- Mid States Hort Expo - Booth #1233 (Jan. 4-5, Louisville, Ky.)
- Western Nursery Trade Show - Booth #505 (Jan. 10-12, Overland Park, Kan.)
- MANTS - Booth #1044 (Jan. 10-12, Baltimore, Md.)
- Great Lakes Trade Expo - Booth #806 (Jan. 9-10, Grand Rapids, Mich.)
- Mid-Am - Booth #202 (Jan. 17-20, Chicago, Ill.)
- CENTS - Booth #5026 (Jan. 22-24, Columbus, Ohio)
- New England Grows - Booth #2618 (Feb. 6-8, Boston, Mass.)

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# Making The Cut

Flowering shrubs can make great cut flowers. Here are a few varieties to consider, as well as talking points to get customers excited about them at retail.

**W**hen in bloom, flowering shrubs can sell themselves with color, splash, size and versatility. But one additional selling point for many types of flowering shrubs is the cut flowers they can produce for retail consumers.

Some of the keys to taking advantage of flowering shrub cuts is to market their strong points, according to both author Lane Greer and landscape designer Reini Moser. These points can include fragrance, vase life, bloom size, seasonality and the ability to dry the flowers. Here Greer and Moser suggest flowering shrubs that produce great cuts for each season to delight your customers.

## SPRING

Of course, when you think of spring, one of

the first flowering shrubs you think of is lilac. These make excellent cut flowers for customers because of the scent.

“They’re a really good, old fashioned favorite,” says Greer, who’s writing a book with John Dole called “Woody Stems For Flowers, Fruit And Foliage,” due out in 2008. “People remember them from their grandmother’s garden, and they’re really fragrant. They’re a harbinger of spring.”

Forsythia also is a natural for the early spring, with its bold yellow colorings. Moser notes that consumers can cut branches in the late winter with buds on them and put them in warm water to force blooms inside. She cautions, though, that the branches cut should have lots of buds on them.

Moser adds that some forms of quince and

magnolia also are both good for forcing in the early spring, right when the buds start to develop.

## SUMMER

The major standout in this category is the hydrangeas, specifically the macrophyllas and paniculatas. These make excellent cuts to stand alone in a vase or together with other flowers and fillers, according to both Greer and Moser. Both singled out the ‘Limelight’ hydrangea as

*‘Limelight’ hydrangea was named a 2006 Gold Medal Plant by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and makes a great cut.*

## In The Spotlight



## Wine & Roses

*Weigela florida ‘Alexandra’*

Wine & Roses has rich dark burgundy foliage that is much darker than older varieties. It contrasts beautifully with the rosy-pink flowers, making for a high impact display in the garden. This variety produces copious amounts of flowers in the spring, and will re-bloom throughout the summer. It can be used as an accent plant or for a dramatic mass planting, adding season-long color to the garden.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zone 4

**Bloom Time:** Spring, flush with flowers through summer and fall.

**Bloom Color:** Deep rosy pink

**Foliage Color:** Dark burgundy purple

**Size:** 4-5 feet tall and wide

**Exposure:** Full sun for best color

**Soil:** Extremely adaptable, but prefers well-drained soils.

**Uses:** Shrub borders, grouping, masses, specimen and containers.



a particularly good cut flower because of its unique color and its strength. The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers also named 'Limelight' its 2007 Fresh Cut Flower of The Year because of its multiple positive attributes, including fast growth, cold hardy to Zone 3, and the fact that it can be harvested at three different stages of development. Moser adds for hydrangeas, consumers should wait until they are hardened off before cutting them. She recommends four to six weeks of blooming before they start cutting, otherwise the blooms will shrivel up quickly. Hydrangeas also are great for drying.

Greer recommends buddleia, or butterfly bush, as another option for summer. They can be fragrant, and the bright purple and blue colors are popular with consumers. She adds that retailers can tell consumers cutting buddleia while it's in bloom will produce more blooms later, adding to the value of the sale. This also will bloom into the fall, giving customers more cuts for their money.

### FALL

Caryopteris produces blue and purple flowers and blooms around late summer to fall, giving customers more choices as the seasons go on. Greer says it is like buddleia, where cutting while in bloom will produce more blooms later.

Hypericum, or St. John's-Wort, includes a few types that make either great filler or can stand alone in a vase with some foliage. It'll bloom after July into the fall, Moser says.

In the fall, there also are options for unique arrangements with foliage, as many flowering shrub varieties have unusual foliage that hit their peak then.

### WINTER

The options become more limited in winter, but a few include several types of hollies, as well as witchhazel, which blooms later in the winter.



*English Butterfly Peacock grows on strong branches, making it a great cut flower.*

# QuickTips

## Tips For Flowering Shrub Cuts

In her research, author Lane Greer has found it is best not to add preservatives that contain sugar right away to flowering shrub cuts. Sugar slows water uptake, which can negatively affect the vase life. She recommends keeping the cuts in acidified water or sugar-free preservatives to promote uptake.

She says the rest of the rules that apply to cut flowers also apply to flowering shrub cuts. New studies show cutting under water not only doesn't help, but can hurt the vase life of cut flowers. Cutting with a sharp knife, too, minimizes stem damage. More information on cut flower care can be found through the Society of American Florists at [www.safnow.org](http://www.safnow.org).

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# Killer Combos

Combos aren't just for annuals and perennials anymore. Flowering shrubs are getting into the mix to add texture and style.



*'My Monet' weigela makes a great container plant, either by itself or mixed in with annuals and perennials.*

With so many retailers capitalizing on the trend toward container gardening, it's no wonder everyone is looking for something to set themselves apart.

One way to successfully differentiate yourself is to offer customers unique-looking containers that show off style, texture, height and color. The next natural step for that is to include flowering shrubs into the mix, which provide a unique look, as well as height and varying foliage colors and textures.

## FOCUS ON THE PLANTS

Combos aren't all about the color anymore, although color is vital. They've moved into a stage of sophistication, where it's all about the impact of the plants inside it. Rita Randolph owns

Randolph's Greenhouse in Jackson, Tenn., where she puts together amazing arrangements of perennials, annuals and flowering shrubs.

She has traveled extensively and given seminars on putting together unique mixed combos. "Of course, I'm a nut for foliage," she admits. "To me, flowering is a wonderful impulse purchase, but if it has fabulous texture, that's really what I'm after."

For Randolph, that means working with plants such as sambucus, as well as oakleaf hydrangea and weigelas. She's even considered using roses, and

## In The Spotlight



## Fine Line

*Rhamnus frangula 'Ron Williams' ppaf*

A great new, non-invasive landscape plant, Fine Line combines feathery foliage with a narrow upright habit. Use Fine Line for narrow hedgerows, as an accent plant or in patio containers. It's a great choice for the perennial garden, and the narrow habit is perfect for framing entrances. It also is a useful, architectural plant for the home or commercial landscape.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zone 2

**Foliage:** Finely cut, fern-like green leaves

**Fall Color:** Yellow

**Size:** 5 to 7 feet tall; 2 feet wide

**Exposure:** Sun or shade

**Soil:** Very adaptable, prefers well-drained soil

**Uses:** Perennial or shrub borders, containers, screens, specimen or framing pathways and doors.



*'Wine & Roses' weigela stands out as the focal piece of this mixed container, giving it texture and height.*

she decks them out with ornamental grasses (carex is a favorite) as well as some fiber optic grass and even perennial lantana for warmer climates.

"I think all of these are good for a year or two or three, at the most, depending on the rate of growth," she says.

For northern climates, she says retailers and growers can use conifers surrounded with heucheras to create a combo with texture and height.

Marshall Dirks, marketing manager for Proven Winners, agrees. He recommends varieties with strong architectural elements, such as the spotlighted shrub, Fine Line Rhamnus, as well as plants with colorful foliage.

"Flowering shrubs remain colorful and interesting for a long time, and tend to be more forgiving than annuals with regard to watering," he says. "Many can go for a week or so without watering, which is great for vacationers. Flowering



*'Summer Wine' physocarpus is just one of the interesting textures in this pot.*

shrubs also provide height and structure to designs, which make colorful annuals 'pop.'"

### GETTING IT RIGHT

Planting up combinations properly in the beginning will help your creations survive longer. According to Dirks, if a timed-release fertilizer is incorporated into the soil, flowering shrubs will need little, if any, additional fertilizer during the growing season. However, they won't be harmed if they are mixed in with annuals and perennials that require frequent water and fertilizer.

He notes, though, that retailers should let homeowners know, if they intend to plant a flowering shrub in the landscape after it has been in a container, they should stop liquid feeding in August. Late season fertilizing can encourage soft new growth right when the plant should be shutting down for winter. If it doesn't have time to go dormant, he says, the first frost of the season can damage tender, new growth.

### LOOKING FORWARD

Both Dirks and Randolph are confident the trend of incorporating flowering shrubs into mixed containers will continue and grow in popularity.

"With all of the compact new varieties available, it will be easier and easier for space-limited consumers to enjoy them," Dirks says. "Take a look at European gardens for our future trends. Sophisticated

Berliners and Parisians expect their public and private spaces to have greenery."

His advice to retailers is to try something new. Customers will love anything that looks unique and different.

"Just look at the latest issue of *Fine Gardening* – their container garden design contest required home gardeners to incorporate a flowering shrub into the design. They looked great! The enthusiasm these gardeners have for unusual combinations is inspiring." ●

# HotTips

## For Killer Combos

Your customers will fall all over great combos that include flowering shrubs - if you make them right. Here are a few tips from expert Rita Randolph:

- Make sure you have the correct potting soil. That means more than a peat-light mix. Make sure it's well-drained but sustainable.
- Shrubs are usually the largest in the pot. Account for that with annuals and perennials filling in and cascading around the focal point of the shrub.
- Always look for foliage color and texture. Foliage comes first, and if it looks good, then flowers are a bonus.
- Another option is the pot-in-pot method, where the blooming shrub is in an extra pot embedded in the container, so it can be switched out if pruning or dead-heading is necessary.

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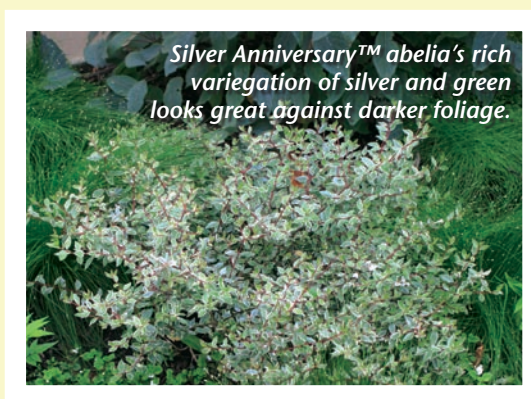


# Coloring The Landscape

When annuals and perennials have gone by, shrubs remain to ensure constant color and texture throughout the seasons.

Flowering shrubs are beautiful, but not just because of their flowers. The foliage itself can add striking color and contrast to just about any landscape, and the flowers are an added bonus. Ethne Clarke, author of the book “Gardening With Foliage Plants: Leaf, Bark and Berry,” notes that even when flowering annuals and perennials have gone by, shrubs are still there, creating interest in the garden.

“I use them [shrubs] as the entire palette of the garden, really,” she says. “When thinking about a planting scheme, I begin with the foliage, because flowers – they come and go. They’re there for the moment, but most often we’re left with either foliage and evergreens or deciduous foliage and branch structure. They’re incredibly important and provide the whole backdrop for the garden.”



## LAVISH LANDSCAPES

Television host, writer and professional garden designer P. Allen Smith agrees. He says he advises homeowners to establish a framework using shrubs that will define the boundaries of the garden and create a feeling of enclosure. He also notes that including a mix of different kinds of shrubs allows for four-season color and interest in the landscape, as well.

Another benefit of foliage, according to Smith, is that it’s a great way to add color to landscapes without a great deal of labor or maintenance involved. “When I design a garden for a busy homeowner, I like to fill the borders with a beautiful mix of shrubs to give the area a well defined framework and to create seasonal interest without lots of fuss,” he says. “And thanks to the hard work of plant breeders, there is no shortage of inspiring shrub choic-

## In The Spotlight



## Sunshine Blue®

*Caryopteris incana 'Jason' ppaf, cbr#2316*

Sunshine Blue’s sunny yellow foliage makes it a valuable plant for the garden, providing season long color and fall blooms when many other plants have passed their prime. It’s a strong grower and attracts butterflies and bees. Use it in the mixed border, or as a mass planting in dry, sunny areas. The flowers and attractive, yellow foliage have a pleasant scent, and may be cut for use in arrangements.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zone 5

**Bloom Time:** Mid to late summer

**Bloom Color:** Rich, amethyst blue

**Foliage Color:** Sunny yellow

**Size:** 3 feet tall, 2 feet wide

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Soil:** Well-drained, loose soil. Does not like to be oversaturated.

**Uses:** Shrub or perennial border, containers, fall interest



*Golden Lanterns® leycesteria's sunny yellow foliage adds color and texture to containers.*

es. They have created an ever increasing spectrum of foliage colors and patterns and

have also improved the existing varieties so they are even more disease resistant and maintenance free.”

For customers whose free time is getting more and more limited, retailers who promote flowering shrubs’ ability to add color with minimal maintenance could help fuel sales in that

category. And, with the container gardening trend booming, why not promote shrub foliage as a colorful component in pots? Smith is a big proponent of using shrubs in containers.

“They are an easy way to give a patio or deck an instant landscaped look,” he says, adding that color and texture can be added to just about any hardscaped surface to create a lush, landscaped look, as well. “The foliage colors and leaf patterns also help build a color scheme that complements a homeowner’s outdoor furniture and fabrics,” he notes.

When helping customers pick out shrubs, consider asking about their styles and color schemes. Helping them make good decisions at your store could help them realize how positively foliage can impact their outdoor living spaces, and make them come back for more. Offering tips on how to use colorful foliage can help eliminate some of the uncertainties customers may have about choosing shrubs, too.

### MAKING FOLIAGE WORK

Clarke says one of the easiest ways for homeowners to create an attractive foliage landscape is to look around at their surroundings.

“Where I always begin is what’s happening in nature locally,” she says. “Go out to the park

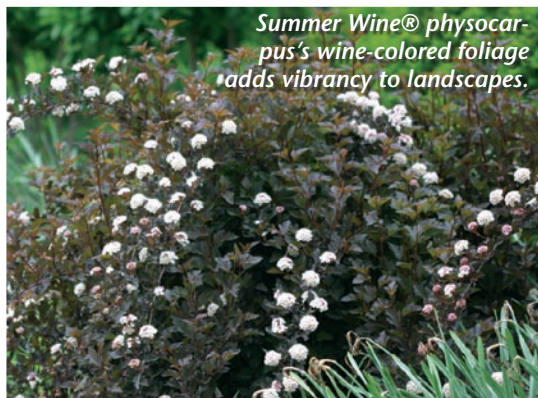
or a nature preserve – look around you and see what’s happening and what you like the look of, and then take that as your stepping stone to your own garden.”

For gardeners in urban settings with a lot of nearby architecture, for example, Clarke recommends following that lead, using severe, clipped hedges and architecture in their gardens. Or, for contrast, they can soften up the urban vibe by using loose, flowering shrubs.

“In one garden I had out in the country, I looked around and there were all these hedge rows, and so that was my lead into what I did in my own garden, because I wanted it to blend – I didn’t want it to stick out like a sore thumb,” she says. “So really it’s look and learn. Look around. Never close your eyes.”

As for shrub placement, Smith recommends putting shrubs with lighter-colored foliage in front of those with darker foliage. The best shrubs for backgrounds, Smith adds, include ones that have darker foliage, base-branching form and uniform leaf texture.

Tips like these can be very beneficial for you at the retail level, too. Merchandising shrubs



*Summer Wine® physocarpus's wine-colored foliage adds vibrancy to landscapes.*

using similar concepts can help them really pop in the garden center, and help customers realize the potential of flowering shrubs, not just for flowers, but for their foliage color, texture and structure.

“I think the industry needs to continue to get the word out to the public about the importance and value of foliage in designing with plants,” says Smith. “Not just the foliage of annuals and perennials.” ●

# HotTips

## For Making The Most Of Foliage

P. Allen Smith offers some tips on making the most of foliage in the landscape. Consider these ideas when merchandising shrubs at the garden center, too:

- Place shrubs with lighter-colored foliage in front of those with darker foliage.
- Choose shrubs with darker foliage, base-branching form and uniform leaf texture as background plants.
- Avoid the “botanical zoo” look of several single, unrelated varieties of shrubs. Groupings of the same variety make a stronger design statement and give a garden an organized, purposeful look.
- Use golden-colored foliage sparingly, as accents. Too many yellow-hued leaves give a garden the look of unhealthy plants.
- By placing contrasting colors and textures of shrub foliage next to one another, the differences of each can be better appreciated.

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*Petit Bleu™ caryopteris' deep blue flowers will attract butterflies to the late summer garden. The color lasts from late summer to fall, adding value to small-space gardens.*

# Shrubs In Small Spaces

Shrubs can benefit small landscapes by offering four-season interest, height and texture for tight spaces.



*Midnight Wine® weigela's dark burgundy-purple leaves make it a striking accent plant for smaller gardens.*

Limited space in the garden is by no means an excuse for consumers not to purchase shrubs. With so many varieties available, and just as many ways in which to use them, anyone can benefit from the color, texture and structure shrubs offer in the landscape.

Melinda Myers, author of “Can’t Miss Small Space Gardening,” says her reason for writing the book was twofold. “I think we can all see that there’s a big trend for baby boomers downsizing and some of the younger generations wanting (their gardens to be more for) entertainment, or creating function in their landscapes,” she says. Her other reason for writing the book was her own passion for small-space gardening. “A lot of the ideas and trends are things I’ve learned along the way, either by doing it, or from other gardeners and professionals, as well, and

wanted to share,” she says.

One of the main pieces of advice she offers is that gardeners with limited space choose plants that will provide as much added value as possible, such as interesting bark, flowers, fruit, good fall color, fragrance and attractiveness to birds and butterflies. Four-season interest is key, as well. “Those are ways to maximize every square foot of your landscape,” she says.

Myers adds that limited space means the plants gardeners choose have to offer both function and beauty, and it’s important to team shrubs with annuals and perennials, too. “In a small-scale garden, I think it’s even more critical, because everything’s a mixed garden. Your whole landscape should be looked at as a mixture of small-scale trees, small-scale shrubs, flowers, annuals, perennials and bulbs

In The Spotlight



## Chardonnay Pearls®

*Deutzia gracilis 'Duncan' pp#16,098, cbr#2640*

Chardonnay Pearls features attractive, crisp, chartreuse foliage that provides season-long garden color. Pearl-like buds open to fragrant, white blooms – a lovely combination with the chartreuse foliage. This compact shrub fits easily into the perennial garden or at the front of the shrub border. The sunny foliage is a nice contrast to many popular plants, and will brighten the corners of the home garden.

**Hardiness:** USDA Zone 5

**Bloom Time:** Spring

**Bloom Color:** White

**Foliage Color:** Lime-yellow

**Size:** 20-36 inches tall,  
18-24 inches wide

**Exposure:** Partial Shade

**Soil:** Prefers well-drained, moist soil,  
pH adaptable

**Uses:** Perennial or shrub borders,  
masses, groupings, mixed containers.



and not relegated into separate beds.”

Dwarf shrubs or shrubs with a smaller habit in general are great options for small-space gardeners. For example, Myers notes that Summer Wine® physocarpus from Proven Winners ColorChoice is a great small space alternative to other ninebark varieties because of its size. “It’s a smaller scale that’s going to fit better into some of those landscapes,” she says.

Eric Liskey, deputy editor of Garden & Outdoor Living at *Better Homes And Gardens*, says some of his favorite shrubs for small spaces are the “dwarf versions of plants that traditionally have been used in their larger forms. My Monet™ weigela is a good example.”

“Smaller shrubs allow homeowners to create a small garden that has the same relative proportions you might see in a larger garden,” adds Liskey. “People like having a variety of plants – trees, shrubs, annuals and perennials – but it’s hard to do in a tiny flower bed. Using dwarf shrubs gives small-space gardeners that ability.”

### THE RIGHT FIT

Myers notes that one of the biggest challenges home gardeners face is landscape design, so offering your customers solutions for their small spaces

is a great idea. Let them know they can use shrubs to their advantage, thinking of them as they would furnishings in their homes. “I think they make great dividers and great focal points,” says Myers. “Think of them as some of the main features in your landscape.” She adds that shrubs can really become the anchors for smaller gardens, too. “We have to get away from using shrubs as hedges or just screens,” she says. “I think too often we relegate shrubs into lines, into real specific tasks and functions within our landscapes. They do well with that, but (it’s good to) mix it up.”

### POT IT UP

Another great option for your small scale gardening customers is to plant shrubs in containers. Myers notes that for consumers in the North, it’s a good idea to buy shrubs at least one zone hardier if they’re going to be planted in containers. Others, though, might simply want to treat shrubs as annuals.

“I know that kind of makes some of us cringe, but I find more and more customers are willing to spend that kind of money on a smaller scale shrub, use it in a pot, and if they need to, replace it next year,” says Myers. And, for gardeners with small spaces, container shrubs can really

be invaluable. “In small spaces, getting height without a big footprint is always a challenge, and I think by putting shrubs in pots, the container reduces the footprint in the landscape, but gives you added height,” Myers says. She also notes that planting shrubs

in containers gives gardeners maximum versatility, allowing them to change out the displays throughout the season with little effort. Mixing them with different companion plants throughout the season is a great benefit, too.

“I think shrubs are that plant that can be teamed up with anything,” says Myers. “I think that’s what gives them a lot of value in the small landscape.” ●



# Q&A

## How can I promote shrubs to customers who have limited space?

“I think the biggest issue is simply educating the consumer,” says Eric Liskey, deputy editor of Garden & Outdoor Living at *Better Homes And Gardens*. “The virtues of a plant that stays small and needs little maintenance are self-evident. But people walk into a nursery and all the 1- and 2-gallon plants pretty much look the same. So they need something to tell them, in big letters, ‘This plant stays small.’ I think a section in a garden center that was devoted to plants for small spaces could be a hit, at least in some urban areas where properties tend to be smaller.”

Melinda Myers, author of “Can’t Miss Small Space Gardening,” agrees, saying, “Anything that will help that small space gardener locate those plants easily instead of going down all the rows of viburnum or spirea, is very useful.” She also suggests marking plants for small spaces with a dot or symbol – something recognizable that will help the customer quickly and easily find shrubs that will work for them.

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