



Extension FactSheet

Horticulture and Crop Science, 2001 Fyffe Court, Columbus, OH 43210-1096

Deciduous Shrubs for Ohio

Jane C. Martin
Extension Agent, Horticulture

Shrubs are defined as woody plants of relatively low height, and are distinguished from trees by having multiple stems rather than a single trunk. Shrubs mature more quickly than most trees and some can begin to flower and set seed by the second or third year. However, some plants are categorized as “large shrubs” or “small trees,” as you will see in the following tables.

The following tables give basic information on deciduous shrubs that are generally recommended for use in Ohio. You will need to do some further research to determine exactly which species and/or cultivar(s) are suitable for the use intended. The list is organized alphabetically by genus and is divided into small shrubs 1'-5' in height, and those 6' in height and over.

Small Species—1' to 5' in Height

Name	Attraction	Comments
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> Japanese Barberry	Densely branched, rounded shrub, early to leaf out in spring. Foliage is bright green turning orange, scarlet, and reddish-purple in autumn. The foliage tends to hide the small yellow flowers, but the bright red berries can be showy October into winter.	Cultivars to consider are ‘Aurea’ and ‘Kobold’. Recommended purple foliage cultivars include var. <i>atropurpurea</i> ‘Crimson Pygmy’ and ‘Rose Glow’. <i>Berberis koreana</i> , Korean barberry, is similar and also recommended. The straight species is considered invasive, so select and plant only the dwarf cultivars. Sun or light shade.
<i>Callicarpa dichotoma</i> Purple Beautyberry	Beautyberry bears metallic-looking, purple berries September-October. Clusters of small flowers are present in July and August. Especially attractive in fall with lime-green leaves and purple berries. Excellent border plant.	There are several species of beautyberry, but this one is more refined for garden use; 3'-4'. Recommended cultivars include ‘Issai’ and ‘Early Amethyst’. Full sun and a light, rich, well-drained soil is preferred. Pruning is done in late winter; can be cut to the ground.
<i>Chaenomeles speciosa</i> Common Flowering— quince	Bright orange-red flowers in April, twigs have picturesque branching habit; other varieties with pink or white blooms.	A few small cultivars include; ‘Cameo’, ‘Jet Trail’, ‘Knap Hill Scarlet’, ‘Orange Delight’, ‘Texas Scarlet’. Sun or light shade.
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> Summersweet Clethra	Summersweet bears fragrant flowers in early to mid-summer. The erect, 4" to 6" long flower racemes are long lasting. The fall color is yellow to orange.	Recommended compact cultivars include ‘Compacta’, ‘Hummingbird’, and Hummingbird seedlings. Requires partial shade and moist, slightly acid soil. Tolerates wetness but on poor sites is thin and straggly. Is hard to transplant and slow to recover. Plants sucker and tend to form colonies.
<i>Cotoneaster apiculatus</i> Cranberry cotoneaster	Interesting branching pattern. Glossy green leaves turn a bronzy-red to purple in fall. Small, pink flowers are attractive at close range. The cranberry-red fruit provide an excellent show in late fall.	4-season interest. Sun.
<i>Deutzia gracilis</i> Slender Deutzia	Dense dark-green foliage and profuse white flowers in late May.	If twigs are winter-killed, prune in early spring. Sun or light shade.
<i>Euonymus alatus</i> Winged Euonymus	Extremely vivid red fall color is more striking in a sunny site, but plant will grow in shade. Horizontal form, corky twig projections.	Recommended small cultivars include ‘Compactus’ (though up to 10') and ‘Rudy Haag’ (to 4' to 5'). These cultivars are not invasive. Easy to grow and prune; slow grower.

Name	Attraction	Comments
<i>Forsythia 'Arnold's Dwarf'</i> <i>and F. viridissima</i> Dwarf Forsythias	Low and spreading lush foliage, yellow flowers in spring, can be used as a groundcover.	Recommended cultivars include 'Arnold's Dwarf' and <i>F. viridissima</i> 'Bronxensis'. Sun or light shade.
<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i> Dwarf Fothergilla	White, fragrant, bottlebrush-like flowers appear in early spring before foliage. Leaves are dark green to blue-green, turning yellow, orange to scarlet in autumn, holding color late into the season. The slender, zig-zagging stems form a dense colony and are interesting in winter.	Plant in partial shade in a well-drained, acidic soil with high organic content. 'Blue Mist' has bluer foliage than the species. 4-season interest.
<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i> Smooth Hydrangea Native	Small but upright plant bears large balls of white flowers in July.	Recommended cultivars include 'Grandiflora', 'Annabelle' and several others. Sucker freely; require lots of water in hot, dry summers. Stems can be pruned to the ground in late winter if winter-killed. Sun or light shade.
<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> Oakleaf Hydrangea	Coarse winter character. The foliage is a deep green in summer turning to red, orangish-brown, and purple in autumn. The flowers open white in late June and age to purple-pink and finally brown. The bark of mature plants is cinnamon-brown and exfoliates.	Recommended cultivars include 'Pee Wee', 'Sikes Dwarf' and others. Sun or light shade. 4-season interest.
<i>Itea virginica</i> Virginia Sweetpire	Sweetpire has the double benefit of fragrant, summer flowers and dazzling, red foliage autumn color. Fragrant flowers are 1/3"-1/2" in diameter, upright and clustered on 6" racemes that cover the shrub abundantly.	Recommended cultivars include 'Saturnalia', 'Little Henry' (3' and compact), 'Henry's Garnet' (3'-4'), and 'Merlot', which is similar to 'Little Henry'. Can grow in wet areas, but withstands drought. Flowers on old wood; prune after flowering in June.
<i>Kerria japonica</i> Japanese Kerria	Dense shrub with green twigs and single or ball-shaped yellow flowers in May.	Recommended cultivars include 'Shannon' and 'Golden Guinea'. Prune out winter-killed branches. Tends to sucker profusely. Sun or shade.
<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> Bush Cinquefoil Native	Yellow or white flowers in late spring and sporadically through summer and fall. Slow grower. Easy to grow.	'Abbotswood' has dark blue-green foliage, best white flower; blooms June to frost. 3' ht. Prune to keep low. Withstands poor and dry soil. Sun or partial shade.
<i>Rhus aromatica</i> Fragrant Sumac Native	A low, irregular, spreading shrub of medium texture. Orange, red to reddish-purple fall color.	'Gro-low' is 2' in height x 6' spread. Roots at nodes; good for bank stabilization and erosion control. Adaptable regarding soil. Full sun to partial shade.
<i>Ribes alpinum</i> Alpine Currant	Good small shrub for shady sites, good in alkaline soil. Massing, hedging, and utilitarian use. Insignificant flowers, poor yellow fall color.	Male plants are usually sold. 'Green Mound' is 2'-3' in height, male, good resistance to leaf diseases. Sun or partial shade.
<i>Spiraea spp.</i> <i>Spiraea</i>	Foliage can be various shades of yellow, orange or red; summer to fall flowers can be various shades of pink, red, or white. Fine-textured shrubs that grow fast.	Hundreds of cultivars to select for flowering and size. <i>Spiraea japonica</i> 'Little Princess' is a popular cultivar, 30" height, pink flowers. <i>Spiraea japonica</i> is considered invasive; select and plant only its cultivars. Easy to grow. Sun or shade.
<i>Syringa spp.</i> Lilacs	Blooms somewhat fragrant and profuse. Not susceptible to powdery mildew like the common lilac (<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>).	<i>S. meyeri</i> 'Palibin'—Meyer lilac, 4'-8' ht. <i>S. microphylla</i> —Littleleaf lilac—5'-8' ht. <i>S. patula</i> 'Miss Kim'—Manchurian lilac, 3' ht.
<i>Viburnum opulus 'Compactum'</i> Dwarf European Cranberrybush Viburnum	Forms a rounded mound. The glossy, dark green leaves turn yellow-red to reddish-purple in autumn. Showy white flowers in May; fruits in September.	This plant is very adaptable to a variety of soils and grows in full sun to light shade. 4' in height, compact. 4-season interest.

Large Species—6' in Height and Over

Name	Attraction	Comments
<i>Aesculus parviflora</i> Bottlebrush buckeye	Flowers spectacular in June-July, yellowish fall color. Does not have foliage problems of other buckeyes. Slow grower.	8'-12' height x 8'-15' spread. Full sun or partial shade. Well-drained soil, moist, with organic matter.
<i>Amelanchier</i> spp. Serviceberry, Juneberry Native (<i>A. arborea</i> & <i>A. laevis</i>)	White flowers in April-May, fruit in June that is attractive to birds, fall color red-orange, winter form good. Can be a small, single trunk tree or large multi-stemmed shrub.	<i>A. arborea</i> , <i>A. canadensis</i> , <i>A. laevis</i> all in trade, but plants can be confused. Full sun or partial shade. Moist, well-drained, slightly acid soil. 4-season interest.
<i>Buddleia davidii</i> Butterfly-bush	Flowers small, fragrant, usually borne in spiky, dense, 4"-10" terminal clusters. Various colors. Blooms in summer.	Easily grown. Often killed to the ground in colder areas; prune to ground late winter. 5'-10' ht. Attracts butterflies. Full sun.
<i>Calycanthus floridus</i> Common Sweetshrub	Wide shrub with maroon-red flowers in late spring; flowers and leaves have fruity fragrance.	Recommended cultivars include 'Michael Lindsey', and 'Athens'. Adaptable to any soil. Sun or shade.
<i>Clethra alnifolia</i> Summersweet Clethra Native	See information in small shrub table.	Up to 8' height; can colonize to 6'-10' wide. Several cultivars; 'Rosea' with light pink flowers fading to white, 'Pink Spires' with pink flowers.
<i>Cornus mas</i> Corneliancherry Dogwood	One of earliest plants to bloom in March over period of 3 weeks; small yellow flowers. A durable dogwood.	Large shrub to 20' height; can be limbed up to small tree. Adaptable to soil, does not require acid soil. Rich, well-drained soil best. Sun or partial shade.
<i>Cornus</i> spp. <i>C. alba</i> , <i>C. alternifolia</i> *, <i>C. amomum</i> *, <i>C. racemosa</i> *, <i>C. sanguinea</i> , <i>C. sericea</i> * *Native	These are shrubby dogwoods, with various sizes, twig colors, flowers.	A utilitarian group of shrubs for borders, massing, etc. Most are 6'-10' height. Some sucker to form colonies. Most do not require acid soil conditions; many can withstand wet sites.
<i>Cotinus coggygria</i> Smokebush	June-August flowering; "fluffy" flower structures are interesting. Purple-leaved cultivars are currently more popular over the green-leaved cultivars.	Choose a cultivar for best colors. Green-leaved cultivars are typically hardier than the purples. 10'-15' height x 10' spread. Adaptable to any soil, full sun is best.
<i>Euonymus alatus</i> Burning bush	See small shrub table.	Species to 15'. Full sun or light shade. Roots are shallow so transplants easily. Can be invasive in wooded areas. Slow grower.
<i>Forsythia</i> spp.	Masses of clear yellow flowers in early spring. Foliage turns reddish-purple in fall on some cultivars and yellow on others.	Select a cold hardy flower bud cultivar, such as 'Meadowlark', 'Northern Gold' or 'Sunrise'. May require renewal pruning to maintain size and form; do not shear.
<i>Fothergilla major</i> Large Fothergilla	Flowers are larger and the plant is not as densely branched as <i>F. gardenii</i> .	Good massing shrub to 6' to 10', pest-free. Does not sucker. Shade or sun. 4-season interest.
<i>Hamamelis</i> spp. Witchhazel Native— <i>H. virginiana</i>	Good winter form, interesting flowers in November, February, or March depending on species. Can sucker; plants somewhat free in form. Good yellow fall color.	6'-10' height. Durable plant for the shrub border. <i>H. virginiana</i> (Common) flowers in Nov.; <i>H. vernalis</i> (Vernal) flowers in Feb.; <i>H. x. intermedia</i> hybrids flower in March; it has several cultivars, some with yellow and some with red flowers.
<i>Hibiscus syriacus</i> Shrub Althea; Rose of Sharon	Valued for large flowers produced in mid- to late summer when few other shrubs bloom. Single or double flowers are in shades of red, pink, white, and purple.	'Diana' is a nice white cultivar, slightly shorter, 8'-12' in height. Sun or partial shade and is very adaptable to soil and sites. Can be pruned hard in late winter.
<i>Hydrangea paniculata</i> Panicle Hydrangea	Choose a cultivar rather than the species for more refined habit and flower. Most bloom late July into September. Grows fast.	'Tardiva' is a late-blooming cultivar; blooms in September. Upright plant to 6' with upright white flowers; foliage looks good late in season and is drought tolerant. Adaptable to soil. Full sun or light shade.

Name	Attraction	Comments
<i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> Oakleaf Hydrangea	See information in small shrub table.	Larger cultivars are 6'-8' in height. Recommended cultivars include 'Alice', 'Snowflake', 'Snow Queen', many others.
<i>Ilex verticillata</i> Common Winterberry	A deciduous holly. Beautiful berry-like fruit in winter is the main attraction.	Plants are male or female; make sure a male is available to pollinate the female for berries. Many cultivars available. Wet soil OK, prefers slightly acidic soil, best in full sun.
<i>Magnolia virginiana</i> Sweetbay Magnolia	Open spreading habit. Can be limbed up to a small tree. Fragrant flower.	Several cultivars are available. 10'-20' height. Prefers acidic soil and does well in wet soil. Full sun or light shade.
<i>Magnolia stellata</i> Star Magnolia	Nice winter form. Flowers in March-early April so that in some years, the flowers are killed by frost. Nice summer foliage, yellowish-bronze fall color. Slow grower.	10'-15' height. Full sun for best flowering. Can be used as a specimen plant.
<i>Magnolia</i> Little Girl Series	<i>M. lilliflora</i> x <i>M. stellata</i> 'Rosea' hybrids. Good flowers later than <i>M. stellata</i> , but appear before foliage.	10'-15' height. Unfortunately, cultivars are somewhat confused in the trade. 'Ann'—flower deep purple-red 'Betty'—flower purple-red outside, white inside 'Jane'—flower reddish-purple outside, white inside 'Ricki'—flower deep purple outside, white to purplish inside
<i>Myrica pensylvanica</i> Northern Bayberry Native	Interesting winter form and gray waxy fruit on female plants. Suckers into large colonies.	'Myda' is a female, and 'Myriman' the male for pollination. To 9' in height. Adaptable to any soil and salt tolerant. No pests.
<i>Viburnum spp.</i> Viburnum 7 Native species	Excellent foliage, striking flowers that are primarily white, showy fruit, fall color, and interesting winter appearance for many.	Great group of utilitarian and flowering shrubs. Many cultivars available, and a group worth exploring. Some have 4-season interest.

Suggested Resources

- Dirr, Michael A. 1998. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation, and Uses*. Stipes Publishing Company.
- Fisher, Kathleen. 2001. *Taylor's Guide to Shrubs*. Houghton Mifflin Co.
- Poor, Janet, Nancy Brewster. 1996. *Plants That Merit Attention, Vol. II, Shrubs*. Timber Press.
- Rose, Mary A., Cassandra Sheaffer. 1998. *The Native Plants of Ohio*. Ohio State University Extension Bulletin No. 865. The Ohio State University. This bulletin is available on the Extension Ohioline web site at: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b865/index.html>

Visit Ohio State University Extension's web site "Ohioline" at:
<http://ohioline.osu.edu>