

Golden foliage simulates sunshine



For brilliant leaf color from summer to frost, it's hard to beat *Fuchsia* 'Autumnale'. PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

Garden centers often organize plants in groups according to a variety of different categories, all with the intention of helping the customer find the specific kind of plant they might be looking for. Signage of these diverse groups can be very helpful. You'll often see signs indicating categories such as shade trees, conifers, ground covers, native plants, and others.

Perhaps customers would be intrigued by categories based on foliage color.

Some years ago, golden foliage was often associated with a plant in evident need of help. Maybe the plant needed more nitrogen. Maybe it had iron chlorosis and needed a dose of iron to make it green again. Whatever the situation, something was clearly wrong. Yellow-colored plants were generally not considered an asset.

However, as someone who lives and gardens in Oregon, the yellow foliage color has taken on a new meaning. We have so many deciduous and evergreen

plants making up a sea of green foliage that the color yellow makes a garden bed really stand out.

Many times in life, we can be surrounded by things that we rarely notice and probably pay little attention to. The color of foliage can be one.

Glowing examples

In my garden, there are many plants with yellow foliage and others that are partially yellow. Now that I have been looking for yellow plants, it is somewhat overwhelming to see the diversity of color that is now commonly planted.

There is certainly no way to list them all, but here are some plants that are regularly seen, or perhaps should be seen more often:

Jasminum officinale 'Fiona Sunrise' — There are many different cultivars of jasmine, but for yellow foliage, this one is a knockout. It can take sun and some shade, although in the shade, the leaf color may not be as brilliant.

It is usually trained as a vine, and does



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need some support, such as a trellis or fence. It is often considered as semi-evergreen, but it seems like an oxymoron to call it "evergreen" when it is actually yellow! In a very cold winter, the plant in my garden will lose its leaves, but not to worry. New leaf buds appear in early spring,

Aralia cordata 'Sun King' is hard to beat to brighten up a shady spot in the garden. It shows off best when given some sun. With too much shade, the yellow leaf color will fade. It is an herbaceous perennial — and so dies to the ground in the winter — but it makes an excellent container plant for summer. Spikes of white flowers appear in summer, and they are followed by purplish black berries that are a treat for birds.

Choisya ternata 'Sundance' A broad-leaf evergreen shrub, has golden yellow foliage and white fragrant flowers. It grows well here in the Pacific Northwest and can be planted in full sun. It should be considered as a permanent shrub that will reach 5–6 feet in height and become equally as wide. For someone starting a yellow foliage garden, this would be an ideal plant to begin with because it is attractive and very easy to grow with no pest problems.

Fuchsia 'Autumnale' is hard to beat for brilliant leaf color from summer to frost. In addition to the leaf color, it also produces red and purple flowers. A wonderful plant for a hanging basket or planter box to let the long stems hang downward. Give this plant part shade to shade and it will thrive. Considered an annual, this past winter I had two plants in a container, and while they died back to the crown, they survived. This would ➤

What I'm Hearing

be a striking plant in a container with yellow foliage plants around it and would be excellent for giving customer plant combination ideas.

A welcome surprise

Visiting another garden is usually a treat — and seeing a new plant that immediately becomes a ‘must have’ is even a better treat.

Recently, I was part of a group visiting a Beaverton garden. We encountered a plant that looked like a juniper, but it was very soft to the touch and was golden yellow.

No one knew the name, so some horticulture research was necessary. It has been in the garden for three years and is growing like a low shrub, just like many junipers do.

Soon, the common name was discovered and then the Latin name. The common name is Breath of Heaven, and



The author discovered Breath of Heaven (*Colonema pulchrum* 'Sunset Gold') on a garden tour and was awed with its splashy, golden yellow color. PHOTO BY MIKE DARCY

the Latin name is *Coleonema pulchrum* ‘Sunset Gold’. I do not know much about it, but it is growing in a sunny location and made a stunning statement against a background of green shrubs.

Bringing some needed attention

Mentioning the yellow foliage plants above is like a tiny tip of an iceberg when considering what is available. If a garden center created categories of plants based on foliage, they could create a special section devoted to golden yellow foliage

which would surely attract attention. Even a customer not particularly looking for a gold foliage plant might be intrigued enough to check it out.

Displays of plants with various colors of foliage could spark interest and give gardeners some ideas for plant combinations for their own garden. In 1908, noted British horticulturist and garden designer Gertrude Jekyll said it best when she wrote, “Suddenly entering the gold garden, even on the dulllest day, will be like coming into sunshine.” ☺

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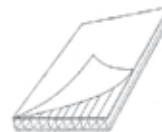
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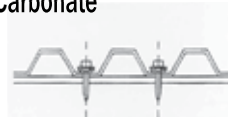
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