



Winter Hardy Plants with Outstanding Fall Color

Throughout Kentucky the lush green leaves of summer begin to change in to a myriad of colors in fall. Many factors can affect the quality of the colors that our trees and shrubs can turn, but the color or range of colors is primarily dictated by variety of tree or shrub. Peak fall color in Kentucky occurs around the same time every October, usually October 22nd – 24th. During this time you will see the best colors high in the trees and as Halloween nears the leaves will begin covering the ground. No matter what time of year you plant, consider what colors your new trees or landscape plants will turn in the fall when making your planting selections. The following is a list of our favorite trees and shrubs with outstanding fall color.

Large Shade Trees

Bald Cypress (Taxodium)

Rust red to reddish brown. Different, but nice.

Beech (Fagus)

Golden brown with some red and orange.

Birch (Betula)

Yellow. Quality of colors varies between cultivars and species.

Blackgum/Tupelo (Nyssa)

Strong red to reddish orange. Considered one of the best trees for fall color.

Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia)

Orange red to red brown.

Elm (Ulmus)

Most elms have yellow fall color of varying quality.

Frontier Elm- Red to reddish purple.

Lacebark Elm- Red/orange with some yellow.

Ginkgo (male cvs.)

Bright yellow to golden yellow. Leaves tend to drop all at once.

Hornbeam (Carpinus)

Native/American- Red, orange, and yellow mixed throughout the tree.

European- Yellow to orange.

Katsura (Cercidiphyllum)

Yellow to orange with some red. Leaves smell like baking cookies as they change color in fall.

Maples (Acer)

Red Maple- Red to reddish orange. Quality and intensity of color varies between cultivars.

Sugar Maple- Orange to yellow. Like red maples variability exists between cultivars.

Oaks (Quercus)

White Oak- Variable but usually is red with some orange.

Swamp White Oak- Variable but usually yellow with some orange and red.

Willow Oak- Yellow to yellow brown.

Red Oak- Red to rust colored.

Scarlet Oak- Strong, bright red.

Pistache (Pistacia)

Orange red to red. Long lasting.

Sassafras

Yellow, orange, red, purple all mixed throughout the tree. Consistently outstanding.

Sweetgum (Liquidambar)

Quite variable but usually orange, red, and yellow.

Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron)

Yellow to golden yellow. Leaves may drop early in dry years.

Zelkova

Yellow, orange, red, and purple. May take some time to fully develop in fall.

See reverse side for more trees, shrubs, & perennials

Medium to Small Ornamental Trees & Large Shrubs

Flowering Cherries (Prunus)

Subhirtella (weeping, autumnalis)- soft yellow.
Yedoensis (yoshino, akebono)- Yellow/golden yellow.

Crabapple (Malus)

Some variability between cultivars but usually yellow to orange yellow. Most cultivars also have persistent fruit that is attractive in winter.

Crapemyrtle (Lagerstroemia)

Some variability between cultivars but usually red, orange, and yellow mixed throughout tree. Also has attractive bark in winter.

Dogwood (Cornus)

Flowering/Native- Red to reddish purple.
Chinese/Kousa- Orange red to red.

Japanese Maple (Acer palmatum)

Green Leaved Forms- Yellow to yellow orange.
Red Leaved Forms- Red to reddish orange.

Linden (Tilia)

Yellow to yellow green.

Parrotia

Red to yellow orange. Consistently very good, larger stems and branches also have attractive exfoliating bark.

Redbud (Cercis)

Yellow to soft yellow orange.

Serviceberry (Amelanchier)

Orange and red.

Smoketree (Cotinus)

Yellow to orange red. Can be cut back to maintain as a smaller shrub.

Royal Purple- scarlet red.

Witchhazel (Hamamelis)

Yellow with some orange or red.

Yellowwood (Cladrastis)

Yellow to golden yellow.

Shrubs, Perennials, & Vines

Amsonia

Vibrant golden yellow. Very striking.

Blueberry (Vaccinium)

Variability between cultivars, but usually yellow, orange, or wine red.

Fothergilla

Some variability between cultivars but usually red and orange mixed throughout shrub.

Oakleaf Hydrangea (Hydrangea quercifolia)

Red to brick red.

Boston Ivy (Parthenocissus)

Rich glossy red.

Redtwig Dogwood (Cornus)

Brilliant red to reddish purple. Depending on variety, stems turn bright red, yellow, or orange as temperatures drop in late fall/early winter.

Spicebush (Lindera)

Clear yellow. Reliable color year after year.

Spirea (Spiraea)

Some variability based on cultivar, but usually strong orange and yellow.

Summersweet (Clethra)

Bright yellow.

Sweetspire (Itea)

Variability between cultivars, but usually red to reddish purple.

Viburnum

Winterthur & Brandywine- glossy red

Virginia Creeper (Parthenocissus)

Medium burgundy red.