

Beyond Forsythia

MAY 1998 by Joan Sargent

During the Forsythia season, I always wish I saw more of my favorite early bloomers. Unlike the ubiquitous Forsythia, these shrubs although less flashy have something to offer the rest of the year. Good foliage, fruit, bright fall color, and they can be forced.

Corylopsis pauciflora [aka Buttercup Winterhazel], a member of the Witch Hazel family, has primrose yellow flowers, a light fragrance and becomes a multi-stemmed shrub at 4-6 ft. Place it in front of a wall or some evergreens to give it a little protection from winter winds.

Ribes sanguinium [aka red-flowering currant], has larger flowers, many per stem, mine is 'White Icicle' but it also comes in red. It grows to 8 ft. tall and looks well with a cloud of blue *Chionodoxa* at its feet.

The third under-used shrub, blooming a little later is *Aronia* 'Viking', the black Chokeberry. The fruit is quite ornamental and the fall color is brilliant. Quite a large shrub, it will grow as wide as it is tall. All these shrubs will grow in sun or light shade, have no serious insect damage and are ignored by my resident deer. I wish they were not ignored by so many people.

[Ed. note: *We have tried to find photos of each for reference.*]

Joan Sargent, a longtime member and master gardener who passed away in August 2012; wrote about 24 gardening columns through the years for our newsletter. We are reprinting them again.



Forsythia



Left and below: Chionodoxa, aka Glory-of-the-Snow, will often poke through the snow, bringing blues/pink colors after the white snowdrops. (Galanthus). No animals eat the bulbs and they spread.



Top: Corylopsis pauciflora, Buttercup Winterhazel, on list of 'great plant picks', Feb. yellow lantern shaped flowers, April bright green and bronze colored leaves. Autumn color is straw yellow. Slow growth, great for small gardens.

Middle: Ribes sanguinium, flowering currant, (shown 'Pink Cascade') a native to West Coast, is a deciduous shrub, flowers in early spring, purple berries in fall.

Bottom: Aronia 'Viking', purple Chokeberry, easy to grow native of eastern North America. Late spring flowers, summer fruit, red-orange foliage in the fall.