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KEEPING GARDENS INTERESTING IN WINTER

Years ago I read a book about creating winter interest in the garden. The name of the author escapes me, but he inspired me to try a few things in my gardens to give me something to enjoy during winter.

Red twig dogwood is at the top of my list. As fall sets in and its leaves turn a beautiful shade of burgundy, the stems turn red. I have them in the circle in front of my home, and in the dead of winter the red stems are a joy to see. Red twig dogwood is also an excellent addition to floral arrangements.

Native grasses also provide a wonderful landscape during the winter. If you have a dry area, try little bluestem. For rain and wet gardens, try miscanthus or a sedge. If you are into floral arranging, try Northern Sea Oats. The seed heads are wonderful, and the plants tolerate both dry soil and wet, rich, well-draining soil. Do some research about the grasses that thrive in Zone 7, as well as the conditions they need to thrive.



Be aware that some grasses grow to six or more feet tall - you may not want them in your landscape.



Another group of plants to consider are those with berries. Not only are they pretty, they provide a source of food for birds. Chokeberries, beautyberries, and crab apples are excellent choices. If you are looking for evergreens, consider the many varieties of hollies. I enjoy watching the birds burrow into the holly bushes under my dining room window during winter and pop up with a big red berry in their beak.



And don't overlook the plants that bloom in the dead of winter - most especially hellebores.

Who doesn't want to see blossoms in February? It is almost heaven on earth to see blooms during the doldrums of February. And if you enjoy arranging flowers, the leaves of hellebores are wonderful in bouquets year-round.