

Winter Colour

Many people complain about the lack of winter colour in their garden. Do not despair! There are lots of fantastic plants that can combine to form a rich tapestry of winter interest on even the dreariest of January mornings.

Quick colour fixes

The easiest way to give increased interest in your garden through the winter is to have three or four pots bursting with colour in prominent positions where you look out of the window or where you walk past.

This can take the form of large winter interest feature plants, bedding with extras or sometimes even a mix of the two.

Winter Interest feature plants:

- Viburnum Tinus – An evergreen shrub. Has red buds followed by large clusters of white flowers from October through the winter until April
- Skimmia rubella – A glossy leaf shrub which has clusters of red buds from October until April when they open up to reveal fragrant white flowers
- Helleborus – Now more commonly known as the Christmas Rose this little beauty has lovely delicate flowers in the winter
- Nandina – More commonly known as the sacred bamboo but do not be alarmed the roots do not spread like traditional bamboo. It has vibrant red foliage
- Conifers – People often say that conifers are boring but this is because they are often only thinking of leylandii. There are so many more fabulous choices
 - Pinus Mugo Wintergold has bright yellow foliage in the winter
 - Juniper Blue Chip has a steely blue appearance year round
 - Cryptomeria Vilmoriniana has green foliage for most of the year but this matures to reddish purple over the winter months

Bedding with extras:

The key here is to mix tall plants with smaller plants. If the planter is to be viewed from one side only the taller plants go at the back with smaller plants at the front. If it is to be viewed from all sides then the taller plants go in the middle with the shorter plants around the edges.

- For a taller plant try:
 - Cupressus Wilma – A lime green conifer which is slow growing. The foliage is lemon scented too
 - Euonymus – This is often only used as a fill in plant in gardens because of its versatility to adapt to different conditions but its variegated foliage forms make a lovely height backdrop for the flowering plants in front
 - Cornus (Dogwood) – In large containers the colourful stems can appear extremely dramatic with an almost fiery element. This can be enhanced using flowering plants and foliage plants in shades of red, orange and yellow
- For smaller plants try:
 - Pansy Cool Wave – This spreading Pansy gets much bigger than traditional Pansies and trails too
 - Cyclamen – A great winter performer with an abundance of flowers
 - Ajuga – There are many types of this winter foliage plant that can help to combine and set off the flowers around it
 - Ivy – Much maligned for being boring but it really helps to bring the flowers in planters alive. The gentle cascading foliage also gives extra visual impact set against the colour of the planter as a backdrop

For the longer term

When designing areas in your garden you can pay particular attention to creating areas with something of interest at all seasons of the year. With particular regard to winter:

For a bare wall

You can grow climbers that have multiple attributes such as the climber Trachelospermum . Not only will this give an abundance of beautifully scented white flowers in the summer but it will also offer red foliage in the winter too.

For a Hedge

A hedge that is green all year such as Laurel is a fabulous backdrop allowing herbaceous perennials to shine against it in the summer but it is not as interesting in the winter. However, if you have a Viburnum Tinus hedge it will not only provide the green backdrop for your perennials in the summer it will also flower from October through the winter and into early April.

For a mixed border

You can plant a variety of plants that are at their best at different times of the year. This means that each plant has its own “time to shine.” In essence this is similar to the hedging as it means that in spring your Rhododendron is the star of the show with its large blooms. However, in the winter it is the green backdrop to the winter flowering Helleborus in front of it.

The alternative is to section your garden so that you have individual areas that are alive with different seasons. If you are to have a winter border where everything is flowering at that time you accept that at other times of the year it may not be as spectacular or you build in areas where you can place colourful seasonal pots.

An example of an interesting winter border could be:

Each square is equivalent to 6” by 6” with the overall size 10’ by 4’



No.	Plant	Description
1	Viburnum Tinus	Evergreen with red buds and white flowers from October to early April
2	Ilex Golden King	Holly is synonymous with Christmas and this evergreen variety has variegated foliage and red berries in the winter
3	Cornus Midwinter Fire	Deciduous shrub grown for its fiery orange winter stems
4	Skimmia Rubella	Evergreen with glossy leaves and clusters of red buds from October

		until April when they open up to reveal fragrant white flowers
5	Helleborus	An evergreen perennial with delicate winter flowers
6	Pinus Mugo Wintergold	An evergreen conifer that is slow growing with bright yellow needles in the winter
7	Nandina	Evergreen shrub with red foliage in winter
8	Sarcococca Confusa	Whilst this evergreen can be grown to a height of two metres it can be pruned to keep it smaller. It have small white flowers from December to March which have an amazing vanilla aroma
9	Erica Heather	An evergreen winter flowering heather that offers bursts of flowering colour. It will need mulching with ericaceous compost
10	Cryptomeria Vilmoriniana	This evergreen conifer has reddish purple foliage over the winter months
11	Thyme Foxley	A variegated herb that is not only scented but it has cream and green flecked foliage that turns pink in the winter
12	Cyclamen	A winter flowering bedding plant that offer an abundance of flowers through the winter months