

PHOTOS: THE BARN NURSERY



# Think Ahead for Fall Gardening!

FALL IS A WONDERFUL TIME TO ENJOY the great outdoors, especially in the comfort of your own backyard. Living in Barrington, we are fortunate to be surrounded by local nature preserves and habitats, and this beauty can be recreated in the backyard landscape. Incorporating trees and shrubs with bright red, vibrant orange, and rich, yellow fall colors can make a landscape come to life. Concentrate your effort on annuals, plantings, lawn care, and hardscapes to create a fabulous fall landscape.

First, replace summer annual plantings. One of the hottest trends in annuals is using unusual kales, grasses, and foliage plants, such as Giant mustard, Osaka Red cabbage, and Bright Light Swiss chard, to freshen porch pots. There is a great variety of foliage plants and kales available now and their longevity, color, and texture make them the perfect addition to an annuals container. Hot plants to look for this season include the Red Bor kale, the perfectly named Chilly Chili ornamental pepper, and Sangria trailing peppers. Add a mum or Cool Wave pansies for color, and Millet or Purple fountain grass for height to achieve fall containers that really pop. And there is usually room for a mini-pumpkin or gourd just for fun!

September and October are the best months for planting trees and shrubs that add fall color to the landscape. The cool weather allows plants to concentrate on root growth, rather than leaf and flower production, making fall an ideal time to

plant. Replace dead trees from the 2012 drought or Emerald Ash Borer with Brandywine Red, Fall Fiesta Sugar, or Autumn Fantasy Maples, all of which have vibrant fall color. If you already have a great specimen tree, light it up! Adding accent lighting to an incredible Autumn Brilliance Serviceberry in full, fall color makes an incredible statement in the landscape.

One of the best shrubs for fall color is the Dwarf Compact or Fireball burning bush. These varieties have tighter branching and are hardier, with less winter die-back, than other varieties. The pointy leaves turn an outstanding cherry red in the fall. It is now accepted in the horticulture industry that differentiation in the landscape is critical to long-term plant health. Consider adding some unique shrubs such as the Dwarf Fothergilla, Virginia Sweetpire, or Tor Spirea. While these shrubs are not as well-known as burning bushes, they are much-loved by landscapers for their spectacular fall color and habit. For year-round color, plant evergreen trees, such as Colorado Blue spruce or Norway spruce, which also increase privacy in winter when deciduous trees are bare.

Outdoor living installations, such as outdoor kitchens and fireplaces, continue to be the hottest trend in landscaping, and autumn is a great season for bonfires and outdoor entertaining. With the growth in outdoor electronics, landscape lighting and all-around outdoor living products, homeowners can enjoy the Bears game in the comfort of

their own amazing outdoor living space. Gas and wood burning fireplaces are increasingly popular due to the low cost of installation and the incredible amount of customization that can be achieved. Using custom-blended paver stone, or interesting natural stone, homeowners can enjoy a custom fireplace that is uniquely theirs.

Finally, there are the end-of-season cleanup tasks. Don't forget to seal existing masonry and patios to reduce winter moisture from seeping in and to protect from salt damage. The fall lawn fertilization is the most critical of the entire year. The application of a winterizer fertilizer will build strong roots and provide energy for the winter months so that grass emerges strong, healthy, and ready to fight weeds next spring. Now is also the best time to reseed or overseed the lawn. Cut back perennials, fertilize trees, apply herbicide to perennial weeds, and mulch planting beds prior to the first frost. Take notes and pictures for spring projects! ☺

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