

# Arrival of fall gives rise to some striking colours



**Carla Keast**

## AROUND THE YARD

While the daytime temperatures still say summer, the leaves are apparently on their own schedule. It says “Turn on the colour! It’s fall.”

Maples top the list for glorious fall colour. Their flaming red is nothing short of breathtaking. In our prairie climate, amur maple (*Acer ginnala*) is a tried and true reliable maple. You probably haven’t noticed the amur maples blending into the overall green of your neighbourhood for most of the summer. Come fall though, you’ll see them — up to six by five metre small trees or large shrubs, all a vibrant flaming red.

Fabulous! They prefer full sun but will put up with some shade, and average moisture.

Our native red osier dogwood, cotoneaster, and burning bush are all very close seconds to the maples for their crimson.

The redosier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*) is a big shrub and a spreader. You’ll find it along the riverbanks throughout the city. It’s ideal for filling in a large moist area.

Cotoneaster is that no-name-brand hedge that runs throughout older neighbourhoods. You might be tempted to think hedging material is its only attribute. Not so. In the fall, it turns a pure bright red. While cotoneaster does make a terrific hedge, at 2.5 by 1.5 metres, it can also be simply used as a shrub. It prefers full to partial sun, and drier soil.

While the name is a bit of a give away, burning bush (*Euonymus*) is a smaller shrub, about one metre wide and the same distance in height. In addition to its striking red fall leaves, it produces red or pink fruit. It will do OK in full to partial sun, but will have the best fall

colour in partial sun. It prefers average moisture.

Rivalling these reds is the birch’s gold.

I have a native birch clump (*Betula papyrifera*) just outside my office window and there will be a couple of days when the gold from those leaves shimmers all the way down the hallway. Needless to say, my whole office glows! Birch don’t hold their leaves nearly long enough after they’ve changed colour, but the memory sure lasts. Birch are low maintenance, medium sized trees that require full sun and moist soil.

None of these plants are show-stoppers during the spring or summer. But double them up as a source of screening, a backdrop for a flowerbed, or a source of shade, and come fall, they’ll transform from invisible to centre stage and in doing so, shake up the focus of your whole yard.

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