

November in the Garden

A November walk in the garden may be cool or wet, but there are many wonderful autumn days. There are trees, especially the maples, still showing their brilliant colours, and there are the flowers that grow well when the days are cooler.

But when I walk through the November garden I have my eye open for plants that might look good in a wreath. There is *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar) and there are many evergreen shrubs, but what I really need are good sources of berries. Even if the berries are not usable in a wreath, they are all wonderful to look at.

In the David C. Lam Asian Garden some of the *Sorbus* spp. (mountain ash) have already dropped some or all of their fruit, but others will keep them for another month or more. You really must walk along the lower path in the Asian Garden where you will surely find three different plants with blue fruit. At the first bridge is *Decaisnea fargesii* (dead man's toes) with wonderful blue bean-like fruit. A little further on the right, below the path is a grouping of several *Dichroa febrifuga* with rich dark blue berries. Almost at the end of the path on your left you will find *Alangium platanifolia* var. *macrophyllum* with its wonderful blue drupaceous fruits scattered on the ground or still clinging to the branches. The contrast between the blue fruit and the golden leaves is almost magical.

If purple is your colour, *Callicarpa bodinieri* is the shrub for you. The birds are attracted to the clusters of violet drupaceous fruit in early winter. Just before you enter the tunnel you will find *Berberis morrisonensis* with berries a lovely shade of red. At the top of the path from the tunnel, against the Garden Pavilion, is *Pyracantha coccinea* (fire thorn). The brilliant orange fruit of this member of the Rosaceae is a pome, like an apple.

The only berry left in the Food Garden is the *Actinidia deliciosa* (kiwi fruit). These will be harvested soon and will ripen indoors. Beside it is *Actinidia*

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arguta with much smaller, smooth-skinned fruit that usually ripens in October. You need to look right up into the canopy to spot the fruit. Before you leave, take a few minutes to look at all the winter vegetables that you can grow and harvest.

In both the Winter Garden and the E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden, you will find my favourite berries, *Gaultheria mucronata* (syn. *Pernettya mucronata*), an evergreen shrub from Chile. The plump berries are white, red, pink or mauve and will remain on the plants until late spring.

The *Sorbus hupehensis* 'Pink Pagoda' in the bottom corner of the Winter Garden as you walk along the path below the Alpine Garden is the easy to see. The fruit, a small pome, starts pink and fades to white as the winter progresses. Then one day in spring the migrating robins find the tree and very soon the fruit is gone. *Malus* 'Adirondack' grows near the 'Pink Pagoda' and its wonderful red-orange fruit remain for most of the winter. *Cotoneaster* and many *Ilex* (holly) species, including the deciduous hollies *Ilex verticillata* and *Ilex* 'J.C. van Toll' provide further interest and it is hard to miss *Arbutus unedo* (strawberry tree) with its vivid red-orange fruit. You can get a closer look at this plant in the planting outside the Shop In The Garden. If you walk along the grass towards the stream you will see a delightful small tree with bright red fruit, *Crataegus grignonensis*. If you are lucky enough to see it capped with snow, you will have the perfect picture.

As you approach the Garden exit, on the left side of the main path, you will see the red berries of the female *Skimmia japonica*. On the ground to the left, opposite the purple flowering, Aconite are bright red, cone-shaped seed heads of *Arisaema consanguineum*.

There is an enormous variety of shrubs and trees in fruit, including *Mabonia*, *Chaenomeles*, *Sarcococca* and *Stranvaesia*, to name a few. But don't leave without one last stop to see the many beautiful small pomes on *Sorbus* 'Eastern Promise' growing on the boulevard outside the main gate. It is hard to describe the exact colour... maybe orange with pink overtones. What do you think?