

## DWARF SHRUBS

Landscaping can be challenging especially when trying to landscape a townhouse or a single family home with limited space and more commonly, low to the ground front windows. Often the traditional plants sold at what I consider poor substitutes for nurseries or garden centers, big box hardware stores such as Lowe's or Home Depot, are stocked because they are low cost plants that grow quickly. Growing quickly, however, often means growing to very large sizes. Too large and tall for the area available and the low to the ground windows. For security matters and just to be open to see out or open your windows, you must continually prune these plants back, and prune them back hard! This pruning is not only time consuming but often destroys whatever shapely grace the plant would have developed over time. Leaving you with unnatural box or rectangular shaped shrubs.

To avoid all that you could install naturally smaller (dwarf) shrubs that require little maintenance and pruning, but are also rarely found at the big box stores. Although slightly more expensive initially, the reduced maintenance costs (both money and time) over the life of the plant will more than make up for the extra initial purchase cost of the plant. Note, just the word "Dwarf" added to the name of a plant doesn't mean it will grow to a manageable size. Dwarf for plants means the same as it does for animals; namely to be a dwarf the plant can only grow up to 60% of the normal size of the non-dwarf parent. So if the non-dwarf parent grows 100' tall a dwarf form of the same plant can grow to 60'. That is why you should the assistance of someone like myself, a Certified Professional Horticulturist, or the staff of a Nursery or Garden Center (not the sales staff of a big box store!).

To give you an idea of what dwarf plants are available I've prepared this:

### List of Small or Dwarf Shrubs

*(Drought-tolerant species are marked with \*\* Items in blue are generally available)*

- *Abelia Variegated varieties such as Kaleidoscope (Abelia x grandiflora) : 3 feet, semi-evergreen, pale pink to white bloom summer through fall. Zones 6 to 9*
- *Amorpha canescens (Leadplant)\*\* 3 feet, blue flowers in July, gray-green foliage. Zones 2 to 8*
- *Abies balsamea 'Hudsonia': 1 foot, slow growing. Zones 3 to 7*
- *Berberis buxifolia 'pygmaea' (Dwarf Magellan barberry): 18 inches, evergreen, foliage reddish-green. Zones 7 to 9*
- *Berberis candidula (Palesleaf barberry): 2 feet, evergreen, bright yellow flowers in May, followed by purple berries in fall. Zones 6 to 9*
- *Berberis thunbergii : dwarf cultivars 'Aurea' and 'Kobold', spectacular foliage in fall, with bright red berries. Zones 4 to 8*
- *Bruckenthalia spiculifolia (Balkan spike heath): 10 inches, pale flowers mid-June, evergreen foliage. Zones 6 to 8*
- *Buddleia Dwarf Varieties (Lo & Behold): 2-3' Purple Flowers, Summer Zones 5-9*

- *Buxus microphylla* 'Compacta' (Littleleaf boxwood): 12 inches, dense evergreen foliage. Zones 6 to 8
- *Callicarpa dichotoma* (Purple beautyberry): 3 to 4 feet, flowers in July and August, metallic-looking purple berries in September and October, lime green leaves. Zones 5b to 8
- *Calluna vulgaris* (Heather)\*\* 6 to 12 inches, white to red flowers in summer and early fall, evergreen foliage. Zones 4 to 7
- *Caryopteris x clandonensis* (Bluebeard)\*\* 2 to 3 feet, blue flowers in late summer. Zones 6 to 9
- *Chaenomeles japonica* (Flowering quince)\*\* 3 feet, red, pink, and orange flowers in early May. Zones 5a to 8b
- *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Minnima Aurea' (Dwarf False cypress): 2 feet. Zones 4 to 8
- *Clethra alnifolia* 'Hummingbird' 'Sixteen Candles'(Summersweet clethra): fragrant flowers in early to mid-summer. Zones 3 to 9
- *Comptonia peregrina* (Sweet fern)\*\* 18 inches, pleasantly scented fern-like foliage. Zones 2 to 7
- *Cornus pumila*, (Dwarf red-tipped dogwood): 4 feet, reddish foliage. Zones 4 to 8
- *Cotoneaster horizontalis* \*\* 1 foot, small pink flowers in mid-June, followed by red berries in fall; semi-evergreen. Zones 5 to 7
- *Cytisus nigricans* (Spike broom)\*\* 3 feet, profuse yellow flowers in early July. Zones 5 to 8
- *Cytisus x 'Beanii'* (Bean's broom)\*\* 18 inches, deep yellow flowers in early May, wide habit. Zones 6b to 9a
- *Cytisus purgans* (Provence broom)\*\* 3 feet, fragrant yellow flowers mid-May, dense upright habit. Zones 4a to 9b
- *Daboecia cantabrica* (Irish heath): 18 inches, purple to white flowers (depending on variety) bloom through summer, glossy evergreen foliage with white fuzzy underside. Zones 6 to 8
- *Daphne cneorum* (Rose daphne)\*\* 10 inches, bright pink fragrant flowers. Zones 4 to 9
- *Daphne mezereum* (February daphne): 3 feet, lilac to rosy purple fragrant flowers appear in early April before the leaves emerge, followed by scarlet berries; plant is highly toxic. Southern Canada
- *Deutzia gracilis* (Slender deutzia): white flowers in late May, dark green foliage. Zones 6 to 10
- *Elsholtzia stauntonii*: 3' lilac-purple flowers and aromatic foliage, maintenance free. Zones 4 to 8
- *Euonymus nanus* var. : 3 feet, whorled leaves and pink fruit capules in fall. Zones 3 to 8
- *Forsythia viridissima* 'Bronxensis'): 2 feet, extreme dwarf habit, yellow flowers in spring. Zones 6 to 8
- *Fothergilla gardenii* : 3 feet, white flowers in mid-May, foliage brilliant in fall. Zones 5 to 8
- *Genista pilosa*\*\* 1', yellow flowers in May, silvery green stems, shade

tolerant. Zones 5 to 7

- *Hydrangea arborescens and macrophylla dwarf var*: large balls of white, pink, blue or red flowers in July. Zones 3 to 9
- *Hypericum x moserianum* (Moser's St. Johnswort): 2', yellow flowers July through October. Zones 4 to 8
- *Ilex crenata* (Japanese holly): 1 to 3 feet, evergreen. Zones 6 to 8
- *Itea virginica* 'Little Henry' (Virginia sweetspire): 3 feet, fragrant summer flowers, red foliage in fall. Zones 5 to 9
- *Jasminum nudiflorum* (Winter jasmine)\*\* 3 to 5 feet, yellow blooms in February and March. Zones 6 to 9
- *Juniperus chinensis var. sargent* \*\* 12 inches, lilac berries in fall, steel blue foliage, evergreen. Zones 3 to 9
- *Juniperus conferta* (Shore juniper)\*\* 1 feet, evergreen. Zones 5 to 9
- *Juniperus communis* 'Compressa': 3 feet, compact and creeping. Zones 2 to 6
- *Juniperus squamata* 'Meyeri' : 3 feet, drooping, cool blue color. Zones 5 to 8
- *Kalmia angustifolia* (Sheep laurel): 3 feet, rose red to crimson flowers in mid-June, evergreen foliage. Zones 1 to 9
- *Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Nana' (Dwarf drooping leucothoe): 2 feet, small white flowers in early June, evergreen foliage is bronze in fall, prefers shade. Zones 4 to 6
- *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Compactum': 2 feet, bright yellow flowers in early May, fruit blue-black, evergreen foliage turns bronze in winter. Zones 5a to 9b
- *Mahonia repens* : 12 inches, small yellow flowers, black fruit. Zones 5 to 8
- *Microbiotta* (Siberian Pea Cypress): Evergreen, low 1-3' tall, wide (5-8') spreading. Zones 2-7
- *Nandina domestica* dwarf varieties – Evergreen, new foliage red, fall foliage crimson, white flowers in Spring, red berries in fall , 2 -5' tall depending upon variety, Zones 6-9
- *Paxistima canbyi*: 12 inches, evergreen, fall color bronze. Zones 3 to 7
- *Picea abies* - dwarf varieties \*\* 1 to 3 feet
- *Pieris japonica* cavatine or other dwarfs: evergreen 2-3' tall white flowers in Spring. Zones 5-9
- *Pinus mugo* 'Gnom' ('Gnom' pine): 2 feet, almost bonsai form. Zones 3 to 7
- *Potentilla fruticosa*\*\* 2 to 4 feet, white to yellow flowers bloom over summer. Zones 2 to 6
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii* 'Fletcheri' (Dwarf Douglas fir): 3 feet, blue green needles, furrowed bark. Zones 4 to 7
- *Rhus aromatica* (Fragrant sumac): 2 feet, orange to purple fall foliage. Zones 3 to 9
- *Ribes alpinum* (Alpine currant): 2 to 3 feet, yellow, orange or red foliage, pink, red or white summer flowers. Zones 2a to 7b
- *Rhododendron*-dwarf species & Dwarf Azaleas: 1 to 3 feet, many colors. Zones 6b to 11
- *Salix repens* (Creeping willow): 3 feet, Zone 4

- *Sarcococca* (all varieties): Evergreen, white flowers in Spring, Dark Red berries in Fall, 18" to 4' tall depending upon variety. Zones 5-8
- *Skimmia japonica* : 18 inches, crimson red fruit, dark evergreen foliage. Zones 7 to 9
- *Spiraea albiflora* var. \*\* 2 feet, white flowers bloom in July. Zones 4 to 8
- *Spiraea x bumalda* var \*\* 2 feet, pink to crimson flowers bloom extended period. Zones 3 to 8
- *Spiraea japonica* var: 1 to 3 feet, pink, rose, or white flowers with blue-green or orange tinged foliage. Zones 4 to 8
- *Symphoricarpos x chenaultii* \*\* 3 feet, pink flowered spikes, red berries in fall. Zones 4 to 7
- *Syringa meyeri* 'Palibin' (Dwarf Korean lilac): 4/5 feet, lavender flowers in spring. Zones 4 to 7
- *Teucrium chamaedrys* (Wall germander): 3 feet, dwarf evergreen. Zones 5 to 9
- *Thuja occidentalis* 'Rheingold': 3 feet, rich gold color becomes copper in fall. Zones 3 to 8
- *Vaccinium pallidum* (Dryland blueberry)\*\* 3 feet, brilliant scarlet fall color. Zones unknown
- *Viburnum* 'Conoy': 3-4', white flowers in Spring, red berries and brilliant red fall color. Zones 7-10
- *Viburnum opulus* 'Nanum' (Dwarf European cranberrybush): 2 feet, seldom flowers. Zone 1
- *Weigelia* 'Midnight Wine', 'My Monet': 2-3' tall. Midnight Wine has purple foliage with light pink flowers in Spring, My Monet is multicolored with White, Green and Pink leaves also with pink flowers in Spring. Zones 4-9