

Gold in the Garden



Cotinus Golden Spirit



Techny Gold

Photo courtesy of Spring Meadow Nursery

By Phyllis Gricus

Bright, sunny shrubs add season-long color to your landscape

Sunshine is a chancy thing where I live. In fact, Pittsburgh ranks in the top twenty for lowest average annual sunshine. Having been born here, I've grown accustomed to gray skies, but this spring in particular has been interminably dark, gray and cold. Day after day of gray after gray—it's been a little dismaying even for me.

On yet another cold, leaden day, I was gazing out my office window, seeking inspiration and just one spot of unclouded sky, when I spied a sunny spot of yellow—in my garden!

It was a grouping of winter aconite (*Eranthus*) just beginning to unfold their large, yellow, cup-shaped flowers. The warmth of their color reminded me just how cheering yellow is in the garden any time of the year. And when it comes from the foliage of shrubs (not here one day gone the next flowers) you can enjoy it all season long.

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Chardonnay Pearls Deutzia



Weigela Florida Eyecatcher



Dreamcatcher Beauty Bush



Sunshine Blue Bluebeard

Designing with yellow

Yellow in the garden adds warmth; it is defined in color theory as a “hot” color. It’s the brightest color in the spectrum and has a stimulating effect. Its plant neighbors influence the apparent brightness of yellow. White will intensify it, while purple, yellow’s complementary color, will lessen it. For sheer color power, red and yellow adds vibrancy like no other combination holding its own with the sun. Yellow and blue is an astonishing high-contrast combination.

If you want to combine several yellow foliage plants effectively, there should be a contrast in their shape and texture. The shape relates to its form: upright, spreading, or weeping. Texture relates to the foliage size, which can be defined as coarse, medium or fine.

The color yellow will enliven a static area of your landscape. Look around your garden if there’s a dark spot that needs kindling, yellow, is the additive you need. Shrubs with yellow foliage are particularly effective since the foliage is fairly constant, where as the blooms will fade.

Here comes the sunshine

Let me share seven absolute choice gold-hued shrubs. First is the aptly named Weigela Florida ‘Eyecatcher.’ New in garden centers this spring, Eyecatcher’s electric yellow and green variegated foliage is a striking contrast to the reddish-pink tubular flowers that appear in late spring and are adored by hummingbirds. This extremely adaptable deciduous shrub will do well planted in part shade, in the landscape or in a container.

Conjuring up more color radiance, is Dreamcatcher Beauty Bush (*Kolkwitzia a. ‘Maradco’*) its golden yellow foliage lasts all

summer long. Like other beauty bushes it is spectacular in bloom: Dreamcatcher has loads of soft pink blooms in early spring. It may burn in full sun—so it’s best to plant it as a bright focal point in a partly shady spot. I managed to get a small potted sample of Dreamcatcher last summer. When I finally got it tucked into my garden last fall, that little shrub was aglow with golden-orange hue.

Sunshine Blue Bluebeard (*Caryopteris i. ‘Jason’*) bursts forth in spring with bright yellow leaves that keep their color right through the season. Late summer, the brilliant foliage is the perfect foil for its profuse spikes of amethyst blue flowers that bloom right into fall and are attractive to butterflies and bees. This vigorous plant with its well-branched habit performs best in sun and well-drained, loose soil. Once established, it’s impervious to heat, perfect for a mass planting in dry, sunny areas or, used singly for a beaming effect in a mixed border.

A gem of plant, Chardonnay Pearls Deutzia (*Deutzia gracillis*) is a dazzling beauty. It has numerous pearl-like buds that pop into attractive star shaped flowers in spring. After the flowers have faded the leaves continue to shine, adding color and vibrancy to the perennial bed or a window box. Chardonnay Pearls is a wonderful compact shrub growing almost 3-feet tall and 2-feet wide in part shade.

Techny Gold (*Thuja occidentalis Aborvitae*) is a native evergreen with lacy, rich gold foliage that intensifies in winter. Tough, hardy and easy to grow as a hedge or specimen plant it will illuminate your garden yearlong. Techny Gold grows best in sun to part-sun conditions to a height of 10-15 feet and width of 5-6 feet.



Techny Gold



Golden Tutsan

Photo courtesy of Spring Meadow Nursery

The shrub guaranteed to brighten a shady spot along with your mood is Golden Tutsan St. Johnswort (*Hypericum a.* 'Golden Tutsan'). This appealing small shrub with its mounding habit, grows just 18 to 24-inches high and wide, sports brilliant golden chartreuse foliage and in mid-summer warm yellow flowers. Red berry-like capsules that appear in the fall provide a vibrant ornamental contrast. Golden Tutsan is an ideal groundcover plant that is dazzling when planted en masse.

Cotinus Golden Spirit (*Cotinus coggygria*) is a smoke tree cultivar that is grown for its (surprise!) foliage. Plant in full sun and the small circular leaves will retain their golden color until fall brings on magnificent colors of amber, burgundy and scarlet. The deciduous, upright, multi-stemmed shrub—up to 8-feet high by 6-feet wide—can be planted as a colorful hedge or for a unique contrast, as a specimen against dark-green evergreens in a sunny border. Plume-like panicles of flowers provide the smoke in early summer on this deer resistant shrub.

Even if you haven't been sun deprived, adding a spot of yellow be it a single specimen, or a grouping of plants, will surely gladden your garden—and your heart. 🌻

Editor's note: All photos courtesy of Proven Winners (except where noted). To learn more about these plants and others, visit www.ProvenWinners.com and www.springmeadownursery.com. Phyllis Gricus is owner of Landscape Design Studio in Pittsburgh, PA and specializes in environmentally sound gardening.



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