

Like Cinderella, many useful shrubs are once a year transformed into beauties as they don colorful blossoms. With careful and creative planning, gardeners can select several varieties so the blooming sequence extends the season as early and late as possible.

Plan your garden with an eye to the hues and tints of those blooms. Some folks keep to a single color--all orange, red, white, or lavender, for example. Others blend shades within a range--yellow with orange and orange red, perhaps. You'll be happiest massing several of the same kind of shrub and blossom color. One of everything may give a polka-dot effect, causing the eye to jump from one color to the other.

After a bleak winter, flowering shrubs cheerfully reward us in spring. Most flowering shrubs repay a bit of pruning and some fertilizing with lovely foliage and otherwise carefree maintenance.

The flowering quince stays in bounds, so little trimming is necessary. Heights vary depending on variety.

The fringe tree--chionanthus--can reach heights of 25 feet, so it may be treated as a small tree or large shrub--depending on how you prune it.

The raphiolepis is not only loaded with fragrant flowers until late May, but it also resists drought.

One shrub with several names--potentilla, buttercup shrub, shrubby cinquefoil--will bloom for ten weeks or more and is not bothered by insects or diseases.