

Most flowering shrubs will grow well in any soil where perennials will grow. Although sunny spots are best for intensive color, daphne, mock orange, snowberry, and witch hazel are a few that do well in shade.

Some beauties, such as Japanese barberry, crape myrtle, hibiscus (or rose-of-sharon), and forsythia can also resist the pollution and other adverse conditions of city life.

Flowering shrubs are not only versatile, they're also lavishly colorful at low prices. Nurseries can keep costs low because most shrubs survive with only a small rootball or bare roots, so maintenance and postage costs can be kept low.

And the purchase may be a wise one. Some, such as certain varieties of lilacs with a dense growth of branches, make notable specimens alone or massed in a group to blot out an eyesore. Or they can be planted in rows and trimmed as an informal hedge.

How soon you want blossoms can help determine the selection. Some, such as Froebel spirea or deutzia, flower soon after being planted. But they have shorter lives than others, such as mock orange, honeysuckle, lilac, or althaea. The longer-lived shrubs may not bloom well for a few years, but once established, they will reward you with years of bouquets.

Combine evergreens with deciduous shrubs so that every season there's a different focal point in the landscape design.