



Patriotic Gardens: Red, White, and Blue in Fall and Winter Gardens

Bonnie Appleton, Extension Horticulturist, Hampton Roads AREC

Joyce Latimer, Extension Horticulturist, Virginia Tech

Elizabeth Maurer, Extension Master Gardener, Virginia Beach

David Close, State Master Gardener Coordinator, Virginia Tech

Leanne DuBois, Extension Horticulture Agent, James City County Office

Reviewed by Leslie Peck, Graduate Assistant, Horticulture, Virginia Tech

Holly L. Scoggins, Associate Professor, Horticulture, Virginia Tech

The Patriotic Garden Theme

Virginia Cooperative Extension developed the **America's Anniversary Garden** to help individuals, communities, and groups commemorate America's 400th anniversary with a signature landscape or garden. These signature gardens have red, white, and blue color schemes. Other VCE garden design, plant selection, plant installation, and maintenance publications for patriotic gardens are listed in the Resources section.

The Challenge of Fall and Winter Garden Color

Spring and summer gardens are easy to plan, regardless of color scheme, because thousands of species and cultivars of annual and perennial flowers grow and bloom during those seasons. Designing color into fall and winter gardens isn't as easy because fewer flowers are available that can survive cold temperatures.

For fall and winter garden color we rely heavily on the leaves, fruit, and bark of woody plants. A tree or shrub already existing in your garden may have red fall leaf color that can serve as the background for a red, white, and blue fall and winter annual or perennial garden. If not, you might want to start a new garden, selecting trees and shrubs with fall and winter color, that is based on our sample designs from Plant America's Anniversary Garden or America's Anniversary Garden: A Statewide Corridor and Entrance Enhancement Program (see Resources section).

If you start a new garden this fall or winter, you can design a progression of red, white, and blue flower color for next year starting with the pansies suggested in this publication, the spring bulbs suggested in

Patriotic Gardens: Bulbs for a Red, White, and Blue Spring Garden, and the annuals and perennials suggested in Plant America's Anniversary Garden or America's Anniversary Garden: A Statewide Corridor and Entrance Enhancement Program, (see Resources section).

Perennial Flowers for Fall Red, White, and Blue Color

For fall (until hard frost/freeze) there are several herbaceous perennials that can provide late-season color. All are hardy across Virginia and work wonderfully in mixed borders along with the AAG-recommended trees and shrubs.

Asters dominate the late-autumn perennial border, and there are many native species and hybrids suitable for the AAG color motif. White wood aster (*Eurybia divaricata*) is a tough native perennial with metallic deep green foliage and sparkling white autumn flowers that is best used in part shade. *Sympyotrichum oolentangiense* var. *oolentangiense*, the sky blue aster, blooms deep blue. There are several cultivars of *Sympyotrichum novae-angliae* (New England aster) with clean white flowers including 'Lyon's White' and 'Wedding Lace.' Of the hundreds of cultivars of New York asters (*Sympyotrichum novi-belgii*) available there are true crimson-reds ('Alert,' 'Crimson Brocade,' 'The Bishop,' and 'Royal Ruby') and blues ('Lady in Blue,' 'Buxton's Blue,' and 'Climax'). *Aster tataricus*, the Tatarian daisy, is non-native but definitely garden worthy. This is one of the latest blooming asters (October and November), tolerant of light frost, and perfect for the AAG display if you don't mind a touch of violet in your blue.

Leadwort (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*) is a tough but beautiful groundcover with royal blue flowers throughout the summer and fall. A bonus with the leadwort is that once the temperatures dip in the autumn, the foliage turns red-bronze. Hybrid anemone (*Anemone x hybrida* 'Honoreine Jobert') sports white poppy-like flowers atop tall wiry stems. "Hardy" fallblooming mums (*Chrysanthemum hybrids*) are available in deep red and creamy white, but be aware that many mums sold as "hardy" may not come back next year and are best treated as a one-time color boost for autumn.

Annual Flowers for Fall and Winter Red, White, and Blue Color

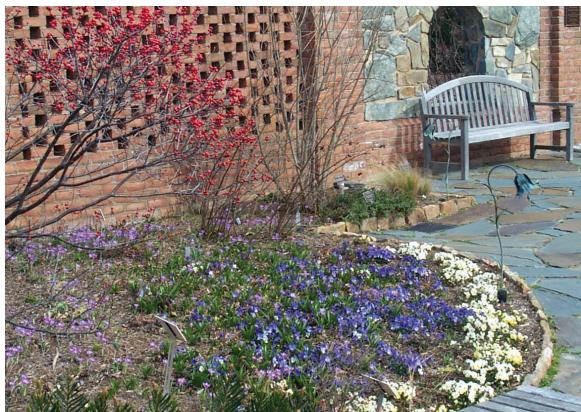
If you plan to transition your fall and winter patriotic garden to a spring-bulb garden, locate and plant your fall and winter annuals and bulbs at the same time. After they flower in the spring, your bulbs can stay in place and your winter annuals can be replaced with red, white, and blue summer annuals to produce a seasonal color transition in the same garden or landscape bed.

Both pansies (*Viola x wittrockiana*) and violas (*Viola cornuta*) are perfect for cool season color in the late fall, winter, and early spring. As with many annuals, seed companies market pansies and violas not as individual cultivars, but as "series." A series is a group of plants selected for similar habit and growing qualities but not necessarily genetically related. Nearly every pansy series has red, white, and blue options. For example, a widely-grown, well-performing series is the Delta hybrids, available in clear red, white, and blue. For those who like a "face" or darker blotch on their pansies, there's the Delta Spirit Mix, red with blotch, blue with blotch, and solid white.

You can also plan ahead and combine fall and winter pansies with late-winter or early-spring blooming bulbs.

Seed trials across the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic have shown the smaller-flowered viola hybrids (often called Johnny jump-ups) to be more weather resistant and cold tolerant than large-flowered pansies that are the best choice for AAG's in zone 6. Two popular series of violas are the Sorbet hybrids and the Penny hybrids – both have several blue and white selections, and at least one red. Penny's White, Deep Blue, and Red Blotch make a great combination, as do Sorbet's Coconut and Icy Blue (there is no scarlet or red in the Sorbet series).

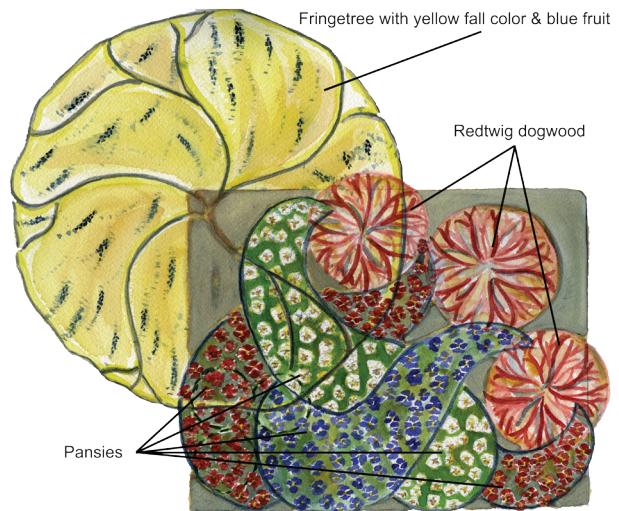
Ornamental kale and cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* hybrids) thrive in cool weather and lend texture and novelty to the winter color planting. The Color-up and Osaka series of ornamental cabbage feature red and creamy white selections, as do the Nagoya, Peacock, and Chidori hybrids of ornamental kale. Ornamental kale leaves are more feathery or rippled than



The red berries on a deciduous holly serve as the background for a bed of blue and white pansies.



This patriotic garden will have a combination of annual red, white, and blue pansies and permanent woody landscape plants (redtwig dogwood and deciduous holly).



This small landscape design (from Patriotic Gardens: Bulbs for a Red, White, and Blue Spring Garden – Figure 2) has pansies in the locations where summer annuals can be transitioned in after the pansies finish blooming.

those of cabbage, which is more compact. For the best garden performance, plant ornamental cabbages and kales in the fall so they have time to become established before really cold weather.

Woody Plants for Red, White, and Blue Fall and Winter Color

Red is the easiest color to incorporate into a fall or winter patriotic gardens because numerous plants have red fall leaf color, red fruit, or red bark. Some of this red will be temporary, as with the leaves of deciduous trees, shrubs, and vines. Some fruits, however, tend to persist or hang on for most of the winter, and a few evergreens take on a reddish color in the fall and winter that continues until spring. The following lists include trees, shrubs, and vines with significant fall and/or winter color (*denotes native plant).

Red leaves

Trees

Deciduous

Amur maple (*Acer ginnala*)
red maple* (*Acer rubrum*)
flowering dogwood* (*Cornus florida*)
Chinese dogwood (*Cornus kousa*)
black gum* (*Nyssa sylvatica*)
sourwood* (*Oxydendrum arboreum*)
callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana* – use cultivars such as ‘Red Spire’/avoid ‘Bradford’)
scarlet oak* (*Quercus coccinea*)
red oak* (*Quercus rubra*)
southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*)

Other trees with red in their fall color mixture

American smoketree (*Cotinus obovatus*)
franklinia (*Franklinia alatamaha*)
sweet gum* (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)
pin oak* (*Quercus palustris*)
sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)
zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)

Shrubs

Deciduous

red chokeberry* (*Aronia arbutifolia*)
red twig dogwood* (*Cornus sericea*)
winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*)
witch hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia* ‘Diane’)
oakleaf hydrangea* (*Hydrangea quercifolia*)
Virginia sweetspire* (*Itea virginica*)
shining sumac* (*Rhus copallina*)
staghorn sumac* (*R. typhina*)



Red, white, and blue pansies can be used in the landscape and in containers.



This combination planting shows blue fall and winter pansies with early spring red tulips and white daffodils.



A red and purple fall color mixture on a sweet gum brightens the landscape.

high-bush blueberry* (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
arrowwood viburnum* (*Viburnum dentatum*)
blackhaw viburnum* (*V. prunifolium*)
American cranberry bush viburnum* (*V. trilobum*)

Evergreen

nandina (*Nandina domestica* 'Fire Power,' 'Gulfstream,' 'Harbor Dwarf')

Vines

Virginia creeper* (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
Boston ivy (*P. tricuspidata*)



Purple-tinged red fall color on oakleaf hydrangea adds color.

Red fruits

Trees

Deciduous

serviceberry* (*Amelanchier* spp.)
flowering dogwood* (*Cornus florida*)
Chinese dogwood (*Cornus kousa*)
Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)
hawthorns (*Crataegus* spp.)
crabapples (*Malus* spp.)

Evergreen

hollies (English – *Ilex aquifolium*, American – *I. opaca*, Foster – *I. x attenuata* 'Fosteri')



The hawthorn has persistent red fruit.

Shrubs

Deciduous

red chokeberry* (*Aronia arbutifolia*)
rockspray cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*)
deciduous hollies* (*Ilex decidua*, *I. verticillata*)
shining sumac* (*Rhus copallina*)
staghorn sumac* (*R. typhina*)
rugose rose (*Rosa rugosa*)
European cranberry bush viburnum (*Viburnum opulus*)
American cranberry bush viburnum* (*V. trilobum*)



Evergreen

cranberry cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster apiculatus*)
bearberry cotoneaster (*C. dammeri*)
willowleaf cotoneaster (*C. salicifolius*)
Burford (Chinese) holly (*Ilex cornuta* 'Burfordii')
yaupon holly* (*Ilex vomitoria*)
nandina (*Nandina domestica* 'Fire Power,' 'Gulfstream,' 'Harbor Dwarf')
pyracantha (*Pyracantha coccinea*)



Two evergreens, a yaupon holly (top) and a nandina (bottom) sport red berries, and the nandina has red fall leaf color as an added bonus).

Red bark

Trees

coralbark maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango Kaku', 'Senkaki')

Shrubs

redtwig/redosier dogwood* (*Cornus alba*, *C. sericea*)

Virginia sweetspire* (*Itea virginica*)

high-bush blueberry* (*Vaccinium corymbosum*).



The redtwig dogwood has red bark.

Red flowers

Shrubs

Deciduous

witch hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Diane')

Evergreen

Japanese camellias (*Camellia japonica* – there are cold hardy camellias for zones 6 and 7, not just for zone 8)



Japanese camellia cultivars offer red, white, red and white, and blue-edged red blooms.

White bark and flowers

While a prominent color in spring and summer gardens, white is a relatively rare color in fall and winter gardens. The best fall and winter white we can get is from the bark of birch trees. A few shrubs with white flowers bloom in the fall and winter. The native vine, virginbower, produces huge displays of white flowers in the fall.

Trees

Paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*)

Asian white birch (*B. platphylla* var. *japonica*)

Shrubs

Evergreen

Japanese camellia (*Camellia japonica*)

Sasanqua camellia (*C. sasanqua*)

Deciduous

Fragrant wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*)

Winter honeysuckle (*Lonicera fragrantissima*)

Vines

Virginsbower* (*Clematis virginiana*)



The native vine virginbower adds a very noticeable display of white flowers to fall gardens.

Blue leaves

Blue is a challenging color to add to the landscape at any time of year, but especially in the fall and winter. Only evergreen trees and shrubs have blue leaf color, with a few trees and shrubs also having blue fruits.

Trees

Evergreen

Atlas cedar (*Cedrus atlantica*)

China fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata* 'Glauca')

Leyland cypress (x *Cupressocyparis leylandii* 'Naylor's Blue')

Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*, numerous cultivars)

Eastern red cedar* (*J. virginiana*, numerous cultivars)

Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens* var. *glauca*).

Shrubs

Evergreen

cultivars of numerous junipers (*Juniperus chinensis*, *J. conferta*, *J. horizontalis**, *J. squamata*).

Blue fruits

Trees

Deciduous

fringetree* (*Chionanthus virginicus*)

black gum* (*Nyssa sylvatica*)

Evergreen

eastern red cedar* (*Juniperus virginiana*)

Shrubs

Deciduous

silky dogwood* (*Cornus amomum*)

arrowwood viburnum* (*Viburnum dentatum*)

nannyberry viburnum* (*V. lentago*)

Evergreen

wintergreen barberry (*Berberis julianae*)

cultivars of numerous junipers (*Juniperus chinensis*, *J. conferta*, *J. horizontalis**, *J. squamata*)

Oregon hollygrape (*Mahonia aquifolium*).

Vine

Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*). (*denotes native plant)

Resources

Plant America's Anniversary Garden, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-210

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-210/426-210.html>

America's Anniversary Garden: A Statewide Corridor and Entrance Enhancement Program, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-211

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-211/426-211.html>

Tree and Shrub Planting Guidelines, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 430-295

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430/430-295/430-295.html>

Patriotic Gardens: Red, White, and Blue Native Plants (HORT-86P)

<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-223/426-223.html>.

Annuals: Culture and Maintenance (HORT-85P)

<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-200/426-200.html>

Flowering Bulbs: Culture and Maintenance (HORT-88P)

<https://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-201/426-201.html>

Planning the Flower Border (HORT-87P)

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-202/426-202.html>



A "woody" America's Anniversary Garden™ shows off the Colorado blue spruce's leaves (foreground), the deciduous holly's red berries, and river birch's whitish bark (both background).



The female fringetree has blue berries.

Patriotic Gardens: Bulbs for a Red, White, and

Blue Spring Garden (HORT-163P)

<http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-220/426-220.html>

Acknowledgments

The authors offer special thanks to reviewers:

Adria Bordas, Extension agent, Fairfax County; Debbie Dillon, program associate, Loudoun County; Laurie Fox, Extension horticulture associate, Hampton Roads AREC.

Landscape watercolors by Elizabeth Maurer.

Photographs by Bonnie Appleton.

Project supported by funding from Jamestown 2007.