

Perennials with Silver Foliage

Silver or gray is an interesting color in the landscape. Similar to white, silver has the ability to soothe and blend with other colors. Yet unlike white, metallic colors often contrast or stand out in green landscapes. Visualize how Colorado blue spruce (*Picea*) or dusty miller (*Cineraria*) shine in their surroundings. There are many perennials that have the same ability to sparkle in your garden. As an added benefit, many silver foliage plants prefer full sun with dry soils making them excellent summer tolerant performers in the garden.

Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*) is one of the most recognizable of silver foliage perennials. The whitish hairs that cover each leaf give the plant a soft covering and gray appearance. This perennial groundcover is grown primarily for its foliage. The cultivar 'Silver Carpet' is noted for its consistent silver coloring, low-growing habit and lack of



White sage

wooly gray foliage on long stems dries well and is often used in flower arrangements. In contrast, silver mound artemisia (*Artemisia schmidtiana*) grows 15 inches tall and remains in clumps. Its foliage is finely dissected and delicate in comparison to white sage. Both artemisias flower in late summer, but the whitish-yellow flowers are often of little consequence.

The lavender-blue flowers on **Russian sage** (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) are one of its most ornamental features. In late summer the flowers compliment the gray, aromatic foliage. Plants grow 4 feet tall and 3 feet wide. If allowed to remain, the silvery stems and leaves will stand in the garden through much of the winter.

Another groundcover perennial with metallic foliage is **snow-in-summer** (*Cerastium tomentosum*). This 6 to 8 inch



Snow-in-summer

tall plant has bright, white flowers that cover the small silvery leaves in May. Snow-in-summer is ideally suited for pockets in rock walls or other dry sites. However, it is not tolerant of long periods of summer heat and humidity.

A biennial with silver foliage is **rose campion** (*Lychnis coronaria*). Rose campion has showy rose, white or red flowers that contrast with the silver-green leaves. Flowers are produced profusely in summer on open, airy plants that are 2 to

3 feet tall. Plants often reseed assuring their place in the garden for several years.

Other sun-loving perennials with silver foliage include: **yarrow** (*Achillea* 'Coronation Gold'), **butterfly bush** (*Buddleia davidiana*) and **wooly thyme** (*Thymus*). In addition, there are shade-loving perennials with silver foliage markings. They are **lungworts** (*Pulmonaria saccharata*) and **yellow archangel** (*Galeobdolon luteum*). (MJF)

flowers.

Another group of perennials that are grown primarily for foliage are the **artemisias**. White sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*) grows to 3 feet tall and often spreads quickly in the garden. The



Lamb's ear



Russian sage




Rose campion

J.S. Peterson, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

Gary A. Monroe, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database

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Garden Guide

Things to do this month

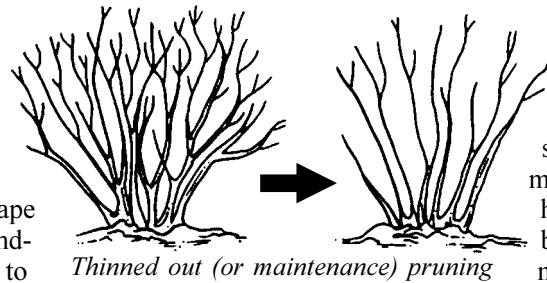
- Some annuals, such as verbenas, snapdragons and petunias, take 70 to 90 days to bloom. They should be started indoors in early spring.
- Buy some new perennials for your flower border. Spring is a good time to renew and add variety to your landscape.
- Complete the pruning of shrubs, ornamental trees before growth starts, except for spring flowering shrubs. Prune those which bloom in spring as soon as they finish flowering.
- Start transplants indoors of tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.
- Do not plow your garden when the soil is wet. It will form clods which are difficult to break up and interfere with cultivation during the summer.
- Plan your vegetable garden on a sheet of paper to utilize the space most efficiently. Remember to rotate the vegetables in the garden to reduce insect and disease problems.
- Buy a notebook and use it to keep all your gardening information. List what you plant in the garden. Include the name of seed companies, plant name, variety, planting date and harvest date. During the growing season keep notes on how well the plant does. If the variety is susceptible to disease, record what was used to treat any problems. All this information will be helpful in planning future gardens.
- Pick a permanent spot for herbs in the garden.
- If you have not done it already, check stored tools and outdoor furniture for signs of rust. Remove any surface rust with steel wool and paint with rust-inhibitive paint.
- Turn the compost pile.
- Place birdhouses built this winter outdoors this month. Birds will begin looking for nesting sites soon. (MJF)

Pruning Mature Deciduous Shrubs

Correct pruning is one of the most essential of all management practices for shrubs in the home landscape. Proper pruning will help keep shrubs vigorous, maintain them in proper shape and form for a desirable landscape effect and add years to their usefulness.

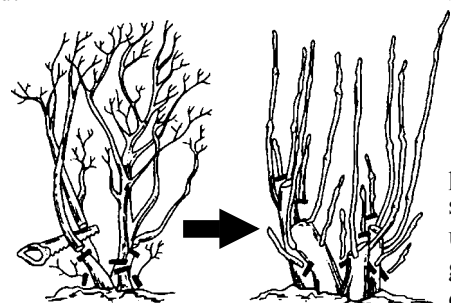
Prune deciduous shrubs to maintain natural habit of growth; remove dead, diseased or broken branches; promote flower and fruit development; and encourage vigorous growth of plants. With most shrubs, the ideal time to prune is during the dormant season, before new growth begins. Spring flowering shrubs, such as forsythia and lilac, should be pruned shortly after flowering to avoid removing next years flower buds. Prune shrubs that bloom after the end of June in the winter or spring before new growth starts. These plants develop their flower buds during the spring growth period. Shrubs that bloom on current season's growth include rose-of-Sharon.

In general, most deciduous shrubs should be thinned out rather than sheared or cut back. Thinning out prevents excessive or unsightly branch formation at the top of the plant and maintains the natural habit of growth. Thinning is



Thinned out (or maintenance) pruning

done by cutting off a branch where it is attached to the main stem. This method, the least conspicuous of all type of pruning, is best used on plants that are too dense. To develop branches that grow toward the outside of the plant, remove the inward growing branches and prune to an outward facing bud or branch. Prune branches at the point of attachment to another branch or back to a bud. Pruning just above a bud prevents dieback of the stem, and a new branch will develop from the bud. Shearing causes dense growth to develop at the end of the branches. Such



Rejuvenation pruning

growth shades the rest of the plant, which gradually loses its lower foliage and becomes sparse and spindly looking. You can maintain plants at a given height and width for years by thinning out. This method of pruning is best done with hand pruning shears, not hedge shears. Thin out the oldest and tallest stems first.

Older shrubs that have become too large or contain considerable unproductive wood should be rejuvenated. Prune the plant by cutting off the oldest branches at the ground, leaving only the young stems. If there are not many younger stems, remove the older wood over a three year period to maintain the overall shape of the plant. New shoots that develop can be cut back to various lengths by the thinning out method, which encourages the development of strong branches. Plants that often become overgrown and benefit from rejuvenation include forsythia, honeysuckle, spirea, viburnum, weigela and other fast growing types. These plants, if extensively overgrown, severely weakened or otherwise unhealthy, can be cut back to the ground but may not bloom for one or several years, depending on the rate of regrowth. (MJF)