

Your garden in February – plant a tree

Does your garden lack maturity? Does the planting seem a bit flat and one-dimensional? Do you find there is no shade in the summer? Would you like to increase the year-round interest in your garden? Would you like to encourage more wildlife into your garden?

There is one solution to all these problems - plant a tree. And now, whilst everything is still in its winter slumber, is the perfect time. At this time of year, bareroot trees (dug up fresh from the ground rather than grown in a container) are available and are often a lot cheaper than a container-grown tree.

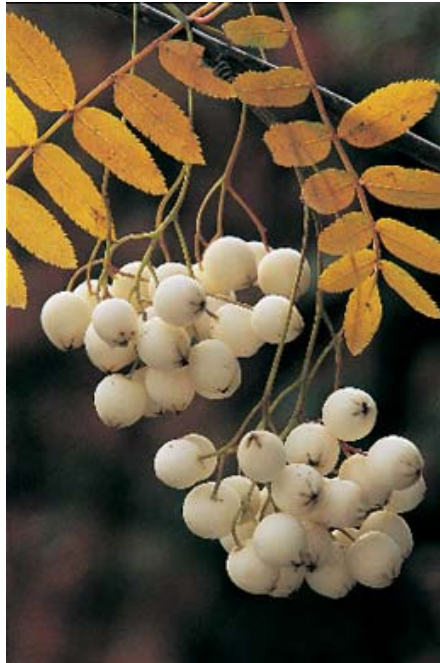
Aha, I hear you say, but trees are only for big gardens. Some trees are only for big gardens it's true. And trees can be troublesome if the wrong tree has been selected for the site, or has been planted too close to a building. But that is the fault of the person who planted it, not the fault of the tree.

There are many trees suitable for small gardens; the trick is to select one that will give maximum value. Ideally, choose a tree that has more than one season of interest, whether

it is beautiful bark, spring blossom or fantastic autumn fruits or foliage.

Trees with beautiful bark include the coral bark maple that I mentioned last month (*Acer palmatum* 'Sango Kaku'), *Acer griseum* (the paperbark maple) with peeling, papery orange bark, or *Prunus serrula* with mahogany-red polished bark that is incredibly tactile.

For trees that produce attractive fruits that persist through the winter, try a crab apple such as *Malus* 'John Downie' or *Malus* 'Everest', or one of the *Sorbus* (rowan or mountain ash) family such as *Sorbus cashmiriana* with clusters of marble-size pink-tinged white berries. (see left)



For the combination of spring blossom and autumn colour, you can't beat a cherry tree, from which there

are many to choose. Good for a small space is *Prunus* 'Amanogawa' which has a very upright (fastigate) habit and therefore requires very little space. Another great all-rounder is *Amelanchier lamarckii*, with clouds of white blossom in spring and gorgeous autumn tints.