

ISSUED JANUARY, 2003

TOM DeGOMEZ,  
County Agent

[ag.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1285.pdf](http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1285.pdf)

This information  
has been reviewed by  
university faculty.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, P.O. Box 210036 • Tucson, Arizona 85721-0036

Shrubs can greatly enhance the landscaping of your home year round. Shrubs offer many features that trees or perennial herbaceous plants cannot. They are small enough to be planted in many places that trees do not fit yet are large enough to fill large spaces and provide mass and structure. They contribute a variety of ornamental qualities to the landscape such as beautiful flowers, striking foliage, attractive fruits or even colorful stems. Their longevity adds life to the landscape during the dormant season and for years to come.

Above 6,000 feet, suitable landscape plants are quite different from those for low-elevation desert. High elevation winters include snow and temperatures below zero. Winter hardiness is one important factor to consider when choosing a shrub. Many may think that because this part of Arizona is no colder than states to the north that plants will perform similarly or better. However, low levels of precipitation in May and June, combined with strong drying winds and late spring or early autumn frosts make it difficult to grow plants which are otherwise low-temperature hardy. In addition, large fluctuations in temperature in the winter months may have an adverse affect on some otherwise hardy shrubs.

Microclimate has a strong influence on the kinds of plants that will succeed on a given site. A tree or shrub that does not grow well in an open, windswept location or cold meadow bottom at 5,000 feet may be quite satisfactory at 6,000 feet in a protected location or against a warm south-facing slope, where it is said to be in a milder microclimate. A key to successful landscaping in Northern Arizona is an understanding of location of the planting site and careful selection of plants that will thrive under those climatic conditions.

## Types of shrubs

There are two basic types of broad-leaved shrubs for high-elevation landscapes. The first group consists of deciduous shrubs, or those plants that drop their leaves during the winter dormant season. Most are hardy, undemanding plants with attractive flowers, form, or fruit. The second shrub type are broad-leaved evergreens, which keep their green foliage year round. Many require a sheltered location and extra attention to soil preparation and irrigation. Broad-leaved evergreens provide bold

foliage as well as striking flower or fruit effect. Only a few species of broad-leaved evergreens grow well in Northern Arizona.

Conifers are another type of shrub that is widely planted at high elevations. Included in this group are the junipers, and dwarf pines and spruces. These plants offer a year round display of color and texture but do not have showy flowers. They do provide mass and structure to the landscape and can be used in conjunction with many flowering plants as a backdrop or foundation.

## Ways to use shrubs

Shrubs can be enjoyed for the beauty of their flowers, fruit, foliage, or form, but they should not be thought of simply as decorative greenery for the exterior of the home. They have many practical uses to make your landscape more pleasant and functional.

The most common way that shrubs are used in the American landscape is in the foundation planting around the house. While this practice originated during Victorian times to cover the foundation of large Victorian style house, the practice continues today though there is less of a need for it. Foundation plantings none-the-less can enhance the style of a house, soften its look, tie it to the surrounding landscape and direct attention to the primary focal point of most houses, the front door.

Shrubs can also be used to define spaces around the house. Shrub borders can attractively delineate the boundaries of your property and turn a yard into a garden by creating privacy and limiting views. Grouping shrubs together to create vertical planes or walls can enclose an area to create outdoor rooms. These walls can be evergreen, deciduous, or both. These borders can also serve as the backdrop for annual and perennial flowers.

Other important uses of shrubs are to indicate the direction you want people or cars to travel, to screen unwanted sights, to buffer noise and to create privacy. Shrubs can be planted to effectively block wind and to control erosion on some slopes.

Shrubs that are particularly beautiful and with long-term interest can make fine specimen

plants to be placed so that they stand out in the garden and can be viewed from all sides and from indoors.

Last, but not least, hardy shrubs can modify climate by trapping the warmth of the sun and deflecting strong drying winds and drifting snow. The microclimates that result extend the season for using and enjoying outdoor areas.

## Selection of the right shrub

Shrubs are often selected simply on the basis of the color or size of their flowers. However, your first concerns should be its cultural requirements and the mature size and shape of a plant. Also important are the foliage qualities and branching structure of the shrub for long-term appeal. Many flowers last less than a month.

The key to successful gardening is to understand the conditions that your property has to offer and then to invest in plants that are suited to your site. Light, soil, air, temperature, space, and precipitation are all factors that can vary the climate around your home and should be considered when making your selections. Changing light conditions around your home is limited to adding trees for shade or removing trees for more sun. Soils can be amended with organic matter to provide better growing conditions. Organic matter can loosen a clay soil and increase the ability to hold moisture for a sandy soil. The amount of moisture available is one of the few conditions that you can easily modify but this can be expensive for larger plantings.

Many gardeners find that their property has many different microclimates and can therefore expand the range of plants that can be grown. Plants that are on the borderline of hardiness may fail if planted out in the open but could thrive in a sheltered location. A southern exposure may be too harsh for some plants but the additional warmth may be a bonus for others.

Large shrubs often look best with a tall house while smaller shrubs compliment smaller structures. Remember that shrubs will mature and that small attractive shrub that you selected at the nursery may eventually outgrow its space. A good rule of thumb is to choose plants grown near doorways that obtain a mature height of about one-third the height of the eave. The mature height of corner plants can reach two-thirds the height of the eave.

Allow enough space for your shrubs to grow in both height and width. Proper spacing will spare yourself endless pruning or the expense of ripping out overgrown plants and replacing them after several years growth. Consider using a dwarf cultivar of a desired shrub if your space is limited.

Once you have mastered the growing conditions and size requirements of your site, now comes the pleasure of selecting plants for the effect you want. Ask yourself what do you want the shrub to do in the landscape? Do you want to create privacy or block wind? Are you most concerned with blending your house to the landscape? Do you want to grow shrubs with fruit that will attract birds? Are you interested in a seasonal garden that allows flowers to create a display for short periods of time? Give consideration to foliage quality, seasonal changes, fruiting habit, branching pattern and other unique features that each plant has to offer.

The following table lists some of the most useful shrubs for Northern Arizona above 6,000 feet in elevation as well as their landscape uses and cultural requirements.

## Acknowledgement

Special thanks to **Hattie Braun**, Master Gardener for her assistance on this publication.

**Table 1. *Dendroctonus* and *Ips* Species that Attack Pines in Arizona**

Name	HEIGHT/WIDTH	DESCRIPTION
<b>Serviceberry, Saskatoon</b> <i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	<i>8 to 10' or larger</i>	Large-vase shaped deciduous shrub or small tree. Spreads by rhizomes. White flowers in spring. Birds like fruit. Yellow to orange fall color. Drought tolerant. Sun to part-shade. Native to western US.
<b>Black Chokeberry</b> <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	<i>Grows up to 10'</i>	Deciduous shrub. Tolerant of cold, heat, wind, and damp soil. Part sun to light shade. Can handle dry soil but prefers moist soil. White flowers in spring followed by black berries and red leaves in fall. Native to eastern US.
<b>Japanese Barberry</b> <i>Berberis thunbergii</i>	<i>4 to 6' tall and as wide.</i>	Very hardy. Stems armed with needle-like spines making this an effective hedge plant. Many named cultivars with leaf color ranging from green to purple to bronzed red. Likes moisture but tolerant of dry, poor soils. Full sun to part-shade.
<b>Butterfly Bush, Summer Lilac</b> <i>Buddleia davidii</i>	<i>Can reach 3 to 8' tall in one season</i>	Fast growing deciduous shrub known for its fox-tail clusters of flowers. Late to start growing in the spring. Flowers late summer. Drought tolerant once established. Full sun. Many named cultivars ranging in flower color from white to pink to red to purple and every shade in between. <i>Buddleia davidii</i> var. <i>nanhoensis</i> is a dwarf form. Can die back during harsh winters.
<b>Siberian Pea Shrub</b> <i>Caragana arborescens</i>	<i>8' or more.</i>	Fast growing upright deciduous shrub that makes a good screen or windbreak. Can be variable in size and shape. Yellow flowers in spring. Very hardy and very drought tolerant. Full sun.
<b>Bluemist Spirea, Bluebeard</b> <i>Caryopteris x clandonensis</i>	<i>Grows to 2 1/2' and as wide</i>	Blue flowers in the late summer. Prune to 6" of the ground each spring. In extremely cold regions, plants may die back completely but will reappear in spring. Moderate water but can handle drought. Full sun to part-shade.
<b>Curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany</b> <i>Cercocarpus ledifolius</i>	<i>Can reach 10-12' in height.</i>	Evergreen shrub with narrow, curled leaves. Slow growing in coldest areas. Full to part-sun. Extremely drought tolerant. Native to western US.
<b>Mountain Mahogany</b> <i>Cercocarpus montanus</i>	<i>Usually 4 to 6' tall and as wide; can be taller.</i>	Slow to moderate growing deciduous shrub. Showy seed heads in fall. Very drought tolerant and very hardy. Full to part-sun. Native to western US.
<b>Fernbush</b> <i>Chamaebatiaria millefolium</i>	<i>Grows to 6' high with equal spread</i>	Semi-evergreen or deciduous shrub. Large showy clusters of white flowers in summer. Slow to moderate growth but extra water helps it grow faster. Full sun to light shade and extremely drought tolerant. Native to Arizona.
<b>Rabbitbrush</b> <i>Chrysothamnus nauseosus</i>	<i>2 to 5' tall</i>	Fast growing, partly evergreen shrub with plumes of yellow flowers in late summer and early fall on woolly white stems. Green and blue forms are available. Plant in mass or to contrast evergreens. Full sun to light shade. Extremely drought tolerant. Native to the western US.
<b>Siberian Dogwood</b> <i>Cornus alba</i>	<i>8' tall and 4 to 8' wide.</i>	Deciduous shrub with bright red twigs and small white flowers in spring. Some cultivars have yellow or black twigs. New shoots have the brightest color. Full sun to partial shade. Moderate water.

Name	HEIGHT/WIDTH	DESCRIPTION
<b>Red-Twig Dogwood, Red-Osier Dogwood</b> <i>Cornus stolonifera</i> (syn. <i>C. sericea</i> )	<i>From 3 to 8' tall and 4 to 8' wide.</i>	Deciduous multi-stemmed shrub. Bright red branches in winter with small white flowers throughout the summer. Brilliant fall color. Most rampant of the red-stemmed dogwoods. Full sun to part shade. Moderate water. Native to western North America.
<b>Peking Cotoneaster</b> <i>Cotoneaster acutifolia</i>	<i>Grows 6 to 10' tall and as wide.</i>	Upright, spreading deciduous shrub with glossy green foliage when mature. Useful as a hedge or screen. Black fruit. Orange red foliage in the fall. Full sun to part shade. Low water.
<b>Cranberry Cotoneaster</b> <i>Cotoneaster apiculatus</i>	<i>Grows to 4' tall and as wide.</i>	Easy, vigorous deciduous shrub. Large showy red berries persist in winter. Abundant small spring flowers. Full sun to part-shade. Low water.
<b>Rock Cotoneaster</b> <i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	<i>2 to 3' tall and 15' wide depending on cultivar.</i>	Deciduous spreading shrub with stiffly angled branches. Leaves stay on plant for a long time, turning orange and then red before falling. Shiny red fruit. Give it room to spread; don't prune ends of branches. Full sun to part shade. Low to moderate water.
<b>Cliffrose</b> <i>Cowania mexicana</i>	<i>Grows from 4 to 6' tall and as wide.</i>	Slow growing semi-evergreen shrub. Yellow to white summer flowers go to seed forming feathery plumes. Full sun to light shade. Very drought tolerant. Native to high elevation dry slopes and mesas of the western US.
<b>Winged Euonymus, Burning Bush</b> <i>Euonymus alata</i>	<i>7 to 10' tall and 10 to 15' wide.</i>	Deciduous shrub with slow to moderate growth. Dark green leaves turn rose red in fall. Looks good against evergreens. Dwarf cultivars are available. Full sun. Handles a wide range of moisture conditions including some drought
<b>Forsythia</b> <i>Forsythia X intermedia</i>	<i>10' or more in height, 8' wide.</i>	Fast growing deciduous shrub. Known for its yellow burst of spring flowers. Many cultivars with a range of height, spread, habit and flowers. Needs pruning to contain growth. Full sun and regular water.
<b>Rose-of-Sharon</b> <i>Hibiscus syriacus</i>	<i>Grows to 12' tall, 6-8' wide.</i>	Fast growing deciduous shrub that resembles a bush full of hollyhock flowers in late summer. Can prune to two or three buds per branch in spring for larger blossoms. Needs winter protection for the first few years. Full sun and regular water but can handle drought.
<b>Rock Spirea</b> <i>Holodiscus dumosus</i>	<i>Grows 3 to 4' in height and width.</i>	Fast growing deciduous shrub. Large white flower clusters in summer. Orange fall coloration. Likes rocky, dry soil. Full sun to partial shade. Very drought tolerant. Native to western US.
<b>Chinese Juniper</b> <i>Juniperus chinensis</i>	<i>10' tall and 12' wide but size depends greatly on cultivar.</i>	Many horticultural varieties have been developed from this coniferous evergreen species. Shrub types range from prostrate to those that are very tall. Foliage color ranges from blue green to gray green some with yellow leaf edges. Tolerant of all adverse conditions except waterlogged soils. Full sun but some cultivars handle light shade. Low water
<b>Blue Star Juniper</b> <i>Juniperis squamata</i>	<i>Grows from 2 to 3' tall and 5 to 6' wide.</i>	Low-growing, dense shrub with very silvery-blue foliage. Good juniper for perennial borders because of its small size. Likes sun but takes light shade. Low to moderate water.

Name	HEIGHT/WIDTH	DESCRIPTION
<b>Privet</b> <i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	<i>Grows to 15' if left unsheared.</i>	Fast growing deciduous shrubs that can be clipped into formal shapes. Small white flowers clusters in summer. Golden leafed cultivars develop best in full sun. Full sun to partial shade and moderate water.
<b>Twinberry</b> <i>Lonicera involucrata</i>	<i>4 to 6' tall.</i>	Deciduous vase-shaped shrub. Fruit ripens to glossy black. Flower bracts turn red. Sun to part-shade and moderate water. Native to moist mountain areas of the western US.
<b>Red-flowered Honeysuckle</b> <i>Lonicera korolkowii.</i>	<i>Grows from 6 to 12' tall and 6 to 8' wide</i>	Deciduous shrub with arching branches and many small pink flowers in late spring followed by red fruit. Foliage bluish-green. Great background shrub. Can be pruned as a hedge. Full sun to light shade. Moderate water.
<b>Tatarian Honeysuckle</b> <i>Lonicera tatarica</i>	<i>8 to 10' tall, 6-8' wide.</i>	Vigorous and hardy deciduous shrub with showy white to pink flowers in late spring. Birds love the red late summer berries. Undemanding and disease resistant. Full to part-sun. Moderate water but can handle some drought.
<b>Oregon Grape Holly</b> <i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	<i>3- 6' tall and as wide.</i>	Easy to grow evergreen shrub with handsome, durable foliage. New growth is light bronze turning green. Yellow flowers in spring. Full to part-sun. Moderate water but can take some drought. Can get winter burned in exposed sites. Native to British Columbia south to California.
<b>Mountain Lover</b> <i>Paxistima myrsinites</i>	<i>Grows from 2 to 4' in height.</i>	Small rounded shrub with shiny, evergreen leaves. Good shrub for edging or ground cover. Partial sun, moderate water and a well-drained soil. Native to mountains in western US.
<b>Dwarf Alberta Spruce</b> <i>Picea glauca 'Conica'</i>	<i>Growing slowly up to 7'.</i>	Compact pyramidal tree. Shelter from drying winds. Great miniature Christmas tree or landscape accent. Likes sun, a cool location and plenty of water. Species native to Canada and northern US.
<b>Mugo Pine</b> <i>Pinus mugo var. mugo</i>	<i>Can reach 8', most cultivars are smaller.</i>	Very hardy shrubby, symmetrical evergreen. Slow growing. Many dwarf cultivars are available. Full sun to part-shade. Moderate water but can handle drought
<b>Shrubby Cinquefoil</b> <i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>	<i>Grows from 2 to 5' tall and as wide.</i>	Deciduous shrub with a wildflower-like charm. Yellow, white or orange-red flowers spring through summer. Full sun to part-shade. Can handle drought but flowers best with moderate water. Native to the southwest US.
<b>Western Sand Cherry</b> <i>Prunus besseyi</i>	<i>Grows to 5'.</i>	Spreading deciduous shrub that can take heat, wind, and extreme cold. White flowers in spring followed by black fruit that are enjoyed by birds and people. Full sun. Grows best in moist soil but can handle drought.
<b>Dwarf red-leaf plum</b> <i>Prunus X cistena</i>	<i>Grows 6 to 10' tall.</i>	Multi-branched shrub with purple leaves. White to pink flowers in early spring. Can be trained as a small tree. Full sun. Low to moderate water. Developed in South Dakota.
<b>Chokecherry</b> <i>Prunus virginiana</i>	<i>Grows from 15 to 30' tall.</i>	Large shrub or small tree with white flowers in spring followed by tart red to black fruit are loved by birds. Will sucker freely. Excellent for hedgerows. Red fall foliage. Full sun and moderate water. Native to North America.

Name	HEIGHT/WIDTH	DESCRIPTION
<b>Pyracantha, Firethorn</b> <i>Pyracantha</i> spp.	<i>Moderate to fast growth from 8 to 12'.</i>	Evergreen shrub that is usually thorny depending on species and cultivar. Can be used as screens, rough hedges, and can be trained as espaliers. White flowers followed by yellow, orange, or red fruit. Full sun, low water, and undemanding.
<b>Smooth Sumac</b> <i>Rhus glabra</i>	<i>Deciduous shrub or small tree up to 20'.</i>	Brilliant scarlet fall coloration. Inconspicuous reddish flowers are followed by showy autumn display of scarlet fruit. Looks good among evergreens. Very hardy and thrives in poor soil. Drought tolerant. Full sun. Native to North America.
<b>Staghorn Sumac</b> <i>Rhus typhina</i>	<i>Can grow to 30' and has a wider spread</i>	Similar to <i>R. glabra</i> . Branches are covered with velvety short brown hairs. Can take extreme heat and cold and will grow anywhere except in alkaline soils. Drought tolerant. Full sun. Native to North America
<b>Three-leaf Sumac, Squawbush, Skunkbush</b> <i>Rhus trilobata</i>	<i>Deciduous shrub growing 3 to 6' tall.</i>	Clumping habit makes it a natural hedge. Unpleasant odor when leaves are crushed. Yellow to red fall color. Full sun to partial shade. Extremely drought tolerant. Native to western US.
<b>Golden Currant</b> <i>Ribes aureum</i>	<i>Deciduous shrub with erect growth 3 to 6' tall.</i>	Yellow spring flowers turning to edible summer berries that are red to black. Red fall color. Full sun to part-shade. Moderate summer water but can handle drought. Native to inland regions of the west.
<b>Wax Currant</b> <i>Ribes cereum</i>	<i>Deciduous shrub to 3'.</i>	Fragrant white flowers in early summer followed by red berries. Yellow fall color. Full sun. Drought tolerant. Native to western US.
<b>New Mexican Locust</b> <i>Robinia neomexicana</i>	<i>Deciduous shrub generally to 6 to 12', but can grow much larger.</i>	Compound leaves. Beautiful pink or sometimes white large pea-like clusters of flowers. One of the showiest native shrubs when in bloom. Shape is generally single stem but will sucker additional stems over time. Thorns inhibit deer and elk from browsing.
<b>Shrub Rose</b> <i>Rosa rugosa</i>	<i>Grows 3 to 8' tall.</i>	Very hardy, vigorous rose. Blooms in late spring in a range of color depending on cultivar. Showy red-orange to orange fall color. Bright red tomato-shaped fruit. Full sun to light shade. Tolerant of dry, sandy soils.
<b>Woods Rose</b> <i>Rosa woodsii</i>	<i>Fast growing deciduous shrub to 9'.</i>	Sparse branching pattern but suckers to form clumps. Single pink to white blossoms in spring and summer. Rose hips persist throughout the winter. Orange-red fall color. Full sun. Low water. Native to western and central North America.
<b>Blue Elderberry</b> <i>Sambucus caerulea</i>	<i>4 to 10' tall and spreading wider.</i>	Deciduous shrub with white flower clusters spring to summer. Edible blue-black fruit for birds and humans. Full sun to partial shade. Regular water. Native from California north to Canada and east to the Rockies.
<b>American Elderberry</b> <i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	<i>Grows 6 to 12' tall and nearly as wide.</i>	Vigorous, suckering deciduous shrub with large, flat, white flower clusters occur in summer. Purple-black fruit used for pies. Needs hard pruning every year to keep them dense and shrubby. Good specimen plant. Full sun to light shade and regular water. Native to wet areas of eastern US.
<b>Common Snowberry</b> <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	<i>3 to 4' tall and 5' wide.</i>	Deciduous shrub with small pink flowers in summer followed by white fruit. Fruit production best in sun. Noted for tolerance of drought, poor soil, and shade. Native to North America.

Name	HEIGHT/WIDTH	DESCRIPTION
<b>Lilac</b> <i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	<i>8 to 15' tall and as wide.</i> <i>Unpruned plants can be larger.</i>	Long-lived, adaptable deciduous shrub with beautiful fragrant flowers in spring. Flowers susceptible to late spring frosts. Annual pruning enhances performance. Often takes 2-3 years to become established. Full sun and regular water but can tolerate drought once established.
<b>Fragrant Viburnum</b> <i>Viburnum x burkwoodii</i>	<i>6 to 10' tall and 4-7' wide</i>	Deciduous but often evergreen shrub with glossy green foliage. Can be straggly in form. Densely packed clusters of sweet scented, rose-tinted flowers appear in early spring before leaves unfold. Leaves turn reddish in winter foliage. Full sun to partial shade and regular water.
<b>Arrowwood</b> <i>Viburnum dentatum</i>	<i>Grows 5 to 15' tall and as wide.</i>	Very tough shrub multi-stemmed, thicket forming deciduous shrub. White flat clusters of flowers occur in June. Blue-black fruit in late summer relished by birds. Red fall color. Partial shade to full sun. Moderate to low water. Native to the eastern US.
<b>European Cranberry Bush</b> <i>Viburnum opulus</i>	<i>10 to 15' high and as wide.</i>	Deciduous plant with maple-like leaves that turn red in the fall. Flat clusters of white flowers occur mid-spring. <i>V. opulus</i> 'Sterile' also called 'Roseum', common snowball, is the best known cultivar, develops no fruit. Full to part-sun and regular water.
<b>Yucca</b> <i>Yucca spp.</i>	<i>Grows 1 to 3' tall depending on species.</i>	Evergreen perennial or shrub with sword-shaped leaves with spikes of white flowers. Ideal accent plant in desert landscaping. Grow in full sun in a well-drained soil. Very drought tolerant. Many species native to southwest US and Mexico. Make sure you select a cold-hardy species.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, James A. Christenson, Director, Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture & Life Sciences, The University of Arizona.

The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation in its programs and activities.

Any products, services, or organizations that are mentioned, shown, or indirectly implied in this publication do not imply endorsement by The University of Arizona.