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## Home & Garden

New shrubs boast ease, fine color

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Today's final part of our four-part series on best new plants of 2007 focuses on trees, shrubs, roses and vines.

Most of these varieties will be available at one or more local garden centers this spring. If your favorite place doesn't have them, ask and the staff might be able to get them. A few also are available by mail order, and those sources are listed.

- **Dwarf variegated weigela 'My Monet.'** A lot of gardeners have smaller yards but want more season-long color, Country Market nursery manager Pat Baumann says. He said he believes this little 2-foot cutie with pink-tinted, cream-edged leaves will be perfect fill for both bills.

This has a nice, long bloom time," Baumann says. "It'll grow in full sun to almost deep shade. And unlike most weigelas, it doesn't get leggy."

'My Monet' is an ultra-compact Proven Winners Color Choice introduction with tubular, pink spring flowers that hummingbirds love. Even when the bloom is done, the variegated foliage gives color to the landscape all the way to frost.

It's also trouble-free, tough in drought and so slow-growing that it might never need to be pruned.

- **Shrub rose 'Rainbow Knock Out.'** This fifth and latest entry in the no-spray, long-bloom 'Knock Out' series is the heaviest bloomer of them all, says the line's breeder, William Radler.

"'Rainbow Knock Out' is an absolute blooming machine and will outperform every other shrub on the market today," Radler says. Given how well his original 'Knock Out' has done, this might not be just hype.

Erica Beadle, plant manager at Highland Gardens in Lower Allen Twp., also believes 'Rainbow Knock Out' is another winner that will be "worth every inch of the 4-by-4-foot space it will take up."

The variety was one of only three new roses to earn 2007 All-America Rose Selection honors in nationwide testing by the American Rose Society.

'Rainbow Knock Out' is a coral bloomer with a yellow center, which might make it a little tricky colorwise to use in the landscape. But like its 'Knock Out' cousins, it's high-performing and low-work.

"It blooms all summer and into the fall with no help from the gardener," Beadle says. Full sun is best, but it'll do part shade better than most roses.

- **New redbud trees.** Kathy McAfee, the nursery manager at Ashcombe Farm & Greenhouses, is a fan of our native redbud tree but isn't crazy about its ungraceful aging (split branches, increasing gangliness, short life span, etc.) That's why she's "waiting in great anticipation" for five new varieties with improved traits, namely:

1. 'Ace of Hearts,' a compact type with heart-shaped leaves half the size of standard redbuds.

2. 'Appalachian,' one of the heaviest bloomers yet in a bright red-fuchsia color.

3. 'Flame,' which has double-pink flowers and glossy, green foliage.

4. 'Hearts of Gold,' a stunner with bright golden leaves.

5. And 'Little Woody,' a super compact purple-pink bloomer that tops out at only 6 to 10 feet.

• **Abelia 'Kaleidoscope.'** Here's another one of those compact shrubs for small yards that delivers seasonlong color. David Wilson, marketing director for Garden Splendor Plants (which supplies Ashcombe), says this plant really lived up to its name in his Lower Paxton Twp. garden last year.

'Kaleidoscope' starts out with yellow leaves with light green centers. They deepen in summer to a blend of butter yellow, cream and honey. In the fall, the foliage turns fiery red and amber with tinges of orange and gold.

"It's got a lot of punch," says Wilson, adding that the long-appearing, small, tubular white flowers are a bonus to the leaf color. In protected spots, the leaves hang around most winters.

Figure on less than 3 feet tall and 4 feet wide. The best leaf color is in full sun, but it'll also do well in part shade.

• **Hydrangea 'Forever and Ever.'** Following in the wildly popular footsteps of the long-blooming 'Endless Summer' hydrangea comes this new three-color line from Michigan's Zelenka Nursery.

As with 'Endless Summer,' 'Forever and Ever' hydrangeas bloom on new wood and old wood.

"That means we should get repeat blooms," says Bruce Kirby, nursery buyer for Stauffer's of Kissel Hill garden centers. "It also makes them more forgiving for the gardener who doesn't always prune correctly. These are also going to be very cold-hardy."

I test-grew three 'Forever and Evers' last summer and was impressed at the rich colors, the lack of leaf-spot disease and their reluctance to wilt in afternoon heat, as so many hydrangeas (including 'Endless Summer') are prone to do.

'Forever and Ever Pink' gets large mophead-type flowers that will be blue in acid soil. 'Forever and Ever Double Pink' is similar but with even more petals, and 'Forever and Ever Red' is the first supposedly red hydrangea that blooms on new wood. (It's actually more of a deep rose color than true red.)

Figure on 3 to 4 feet tall and wide. A site with morning sun and afternoon shade is ideal.

• **Hydrangea 'Cityline' series.** Hydrangeas are the hot shrub lately, and the twist on this new four-color line is compactness -- they grow only 2 to 3 feet tall and wide.

"You won't have to prune these at all, so you won't have to worry about cutting off flower buds at the wrong time," says Danielle Smith, a spokeswoman for Proven Winners Color Choice, which is introducing this import from Germany, where the line was popular in the cut-flower industry. "Even though they're small, they still have large mophead blooms."

The 'Cityline' series uses famous city names to distinguish the different colors: 'Vienna' is pink, 'Venice' is bluish-purple, 'Paris' is rosy-red, and 'Berlin' is soft pink. Keep in mind that soil acidity will affect the colors. Morning sun and afternoon shade is ideal.

• **Dwarf crape myrtle 'Razzle Dazzle.'** This is a new line of super-dwarf crape myrtles -- a woody plant that blooms from July to frost and normally grows to tree size in the South.

'Razzle Dazzles' aren't trees at all but little rounded 3- to 4-foot overachieving bundles of color developed by woody-plant guru Michael Dirr.

Kirby says Stauffer's got a limited supply last summer "and they all just flew out the door. They're compact and prolific bloomers. And they're supposed to be resistant to powdery mildew" (the main bane of crape myrtles).

'Razzle Dazzles' should make ideal, low-maintenance foundation shrubs, and Kirby says they'd even do well in a container. In all, there will be five colors: 'Cherry Dazzle' (cherry-red), 'Dazzle Me Pink' (light pink), 'Raspberry Dazzle' (raspberry-red), 'Snow Dazzle' (white with yellow centers) and 'Ruby Dazzle' (deep pink).

I test-grew a set of these last summer and was surprised to see 'Dazzle Me Pink' bloom right off the bat on a baby shrub that wasn't even a foot tall and wide. Very nice so far. The real test will be seeing whether these are reliably hardy in a cold Harrisburg winter.

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