



Hostas fade to a glorious golden color, with a dogwood, left, and hydrangea, right, in burgundy tones.



Witch hazel has a multicolored foliage that steals the show.

Red foliage provided by full moon maple, left, and Virginia sweet spire, center.

As the air turns crisp, we feel the urge to put on a sweater and take a brisk walk to experience the color scheme of autumn. Maybe you are one of those who feels the need to take a drive to New England and tour the foliage of Vermont or New Hampshire. Think again! There is a kaleidoscope of color in your own backyard. As a matter of fact, *USA Today* has listed Huntington, NY, as number two on their list of “Incredible destinations to visit in fall 2019,” only surpassed by Florence, Italy, as number one.

Here are a few local places of interest, in Huntington, that offer fall foliage, as well as a piece of our local history. Whether you prefer Vanderbilt Museum and Planetarium, Coindre Hall, or Camsett State Park, each of these destinations give us a view back into Huntington’s past, as well as its natural beauty. If you have not been to these hometown gems, make a date to do so, at this time of year. If you chose to leave our town, there are many more great destinations, still staying close to home, which offer the same.

Fall foliage is not limited to trees, which do contribute to our colorful vistas. I would like to touch on some shrubs and perennials that also put on a good show this time of year. Everyone is familiar with burning bush (*euonymus alatus*), but let’s take some time to explore the other colorful plants available in nurseries, that help brighten our October days. In the shrub category, we have Virginia sweetspire (*itea virginica*), whose red fall foliage will compete with a burning bush in the red spectrum. Highbush blueberry (*vaccinium*), oakleaf hydrangea (*hydrangea quercifolia*) and many viburnums exhibit fall color with red highlights, and undertones of purple and burgundy. Fothergilla and witch hazel (*hamamelis intermedia*) display a combination of yellow, orange and red, each leaf contributing its own unique palate to the overall picture.

Other shrubs turn golden and manage to add a glow of sunshine on a dreary fall day. Many varieties of spirea have vivid yellow and orange foliage before dropping leaves in the colder months. Let’s not forget the perennials that contribute their yellow tones of their last stand—hostas, solomons seal and amsonia, made popular after its use in the High Line Gardens of Manhattan.

As you may or may not know, the color changes we admire so in autumn are caused by shortened daylight hours and cooler temperatures, which trigger plant leaves to stop producing chlorophyll. Our best fall pigments are produced by a dry August and sunny September. For the ultimate show of color, all plants need a good dose of sun throughout the year. Fall color is diminished when plants are situated in a shady locale.

I close with this thought: Go out and experience the autumn spectrum of reds, golds, and burgundies right here in Huntington. Appreciate the natural sequence of the seasons, the beauty of fall, before the cold and bleak days of winter descend upon us.

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