



# Lovely Leaves

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Leaves are more than just a backdrop for flowers. Leaves can provide colors, texture and even fragrance. There are many types of plants that can provide these features. They include annuals, perennials, grasses, summer bulbs, tropicals and even vegetables.

## A few color basics

- Yellow can light up a garden. As a complimentary color it mixes well with blues and purples. It provides contrast with pinks and reds.
- Silver, white and gray-blue contrast well with burgundy and black. These shades will calm colors that are too hot or in conflict with one another.
- 'Purple' comes in many shades ranging from red to almost black. It works well with silver, white, yellow and orange. When used with grays, blues and greens, it will have a subtle appearance. Purple leaves contrast well with pink flowers. Dark purples used with silver or white can produce a black and white look.

## Some other things to know

- Variegated plants can be less vigorous than their green counterparts. They do not always grow as large and may have shorter life spans. Some leaves may revert back to green. Variegated plants may need higher light levels, but we have to be careful not to overdo it.
- Green is a color too! There are many shades of green and they can give different affects. Green leaves may also give us interesting textures.
- Color can vary. It may be variegated, solid all season or it may change with age and the season.

## Texture basics

- Hairy leaves can provide a soft texture
- Large leaves can provide bold texture, while smaller leaves provide a finer texture
- Strappy or sharp leaves provide a spiky texture.

## Selected Plants With Interesting Foliage

### Annuals

*Alternanthera* species: several cultivars with purple foliage

*Amaranthus tricolor* (Joseph's Coat): several cultivars with brightly colored foliage

*Bacopa* species: cultivars with yellow foliage

*Begonia* species: cultivars with variegated foliage

*Celosia plumosa* (cock's comb): cultivars with colored foliage

*Dichondra argentea* (silver nickel vine): cultivars with silver or yellow foliage

*Dolichos lablab* (Hyacinth bean): vine with purple leaves

*Helichrysum petiolare* (licorice plant): silvery leaves

*Ipomoea batatas* (Sweet potato vine): several varieties with colored foliage

*Iresine herbstii* (Chicken gizzards): cultivars with colored foliage

*Perilla frutescens* (Beefsteak plant): cultivars with purple leaves

*Plectranthus* species (Swedish ivy): cultivars with variegated foliage

*Salvia argentea* (Silver sage): silvery foliage  
*Senecio cineraria* (Dusty miller): White or silvery foliage  
*Solenostemon scutellarioides* (Coleus): numerous cultivars with colored foliage  
*Strobilanthes dyerianus* (Persian shield): purple foliage  
*Tropaeolum majus* (Nasturtium): cultivars with variegated foliage

### Summer Bulbs

*Alocasia/Colocasia* hybrids (Elephant Ears): cultivars with colored leaves and bold texture  
*Caladium* hybrids (Caladium): several cultivars with colored foliage  
*Canna* hybrids (Canna): several cultivars with colored foliage  
*Dahlia* hybrids (Dahlia): cultivars with colored foliage  
*Eucomis comosa* (Pineapple lily): cultivars with purple foliage  
*Xanthosoma* species (Elephant ears): large, bold foliage; cultivars with colorful foliage  
*Zantedeschia* hybrids (Calla lily): cultivars with speckled foliage

### Grasses

*Arrhenatherum elatius bulbosum* (Bulbous oat grass): cultivar with variegated foliage  
*Chasmanthium latifolium* (Northern sea oats): cultivar with variegated foliage  
*Deschampsia cespitosa* (tufted hair grass): spiky texture from foliage; fine textured in flower; cultivar with foliage that changes through the seasons  
*Festuca glauca* (Blue Fescue): blue-gray foliage  
*Hakonechloa macra* (Hakone grass): cultivars with golden or striped foliage  
*Helictotrichon sempervirens* (Blue oat grass): blue gray foliage  
*Miscanthus sinensis* (Miscanthus, Japanese silver grass): spiky foliage; many cultivars with colored, striped or banded foliage (potentially aggressive plant)  
*Molinia caerulea* (Purple moor grass): spiky foliage; 'Variegata' has variegated foliage  
*Panicum virgatum* (Switch grass): spike foliage; cultivars with colored foliage  
*Pennisetum* species (Fountain grass, millet): cultivars with red/purple foliage (some annuals)  
*Schizachyrium scoparium* (Little bluestem): blue green foliage  
*Sorghastrum nutans* (Indian Grass): cultivars with blue foliage  
*Zea mays* var *japonica* (Variegated corn): cultivars with striped leaves (annual)

### Perennials

*Achillea* species (Yarrow): silver foliage with fragrance  
*Actaea (Cimicifuga)* species (Bugbane): cultivars with purple or maroon foliage  
*Actinidia kolomitka* (Kiwi): vine with variegated leaves  
*Adiantum pedatum* (Maidenhair fern): fine-textured foliage  
*Ajuga reptans* (Bugleweed): Ground cover that has cultivars with colored foliage  
*Amsonia hubrichtii* (Arkansas bluestar): Fine textured foliage; leaves turn yellow in fall  
*Artemisia* species (Artemisia, Mugwort, Wormwood): silvery foliage  
*Athyrium nipponicum* (Japanese Painted Fern): fine textured foliage; cultivars with colored foliage  
*Brunnera macrophylla* (Siberian Bugloss): cultivars with variegated foliage (silvery)  
*Calamintha grandiflora* (Calamint): cultivars with variegated foliage  
*Caryopteris x clandonensis* (Bluebeard, Blue spirea): cultivars with gray green foliage or yellow foliage  
*Caryopteris divaricata* (Bluebeard): cultivar with variegated foliage  
*Cerastium tomentosum* (Snow in Summer): Ground cover with silvery white foliage  
*Dicentra spectabilis* (bleeding heart): cultivars with colored foliage  
*Dryopteris erythrosora* (male fern): fine textured foliage; foliage changing from purple to orange, copper and gold

*Epimedium* species (Barrenwort): cultivars with colored foliage at various times during the season (ground cover)

*Eryngium yuccifolium* (Rattlesnake master): boldly textured foliage

*Geranium* species (Geraniums, Cranesbill): many species/cultivars with colored foliage

*Heuchera* species (Coral Bells): many cultivars with colored foliage

*X Heucherella* (foamy bells): cultivars with colored foliage

*Hibiscus moscheutos* (Perennial hibiscus): cultivars with colored foliage

*Hosta* hybrids (hosta): numerous cultivars with large, bold foliage and/or colored foliage

*Humulus lupulus* (Hops): vine with gold-leaved cultivar ('Aurea')

*Iris pallida* (Sweet Iris): cultivars with variegated foliage

*Lamium maculatum* (spotted dead nettle): many cultivars with variegated foliage

*Ligularia dentata* (Bibleaf Golden-ray): cultivars with purple foliage

*Liriope muscari* (Liriope): cultivars with variegated foliage

*Lychnis coronaria* (Rose campion): hairy, whitish foliage (potentially aggressive plant)

*Lysimachia ciliata* (Fringed loosestrife): cultivars with purple foliage (potentially aggressive plant)

*Osmunda* species (Royal fern, Cinnamon fern): fine textured foliage

*Penstemon* species (beard tongue): cultivars with purple foliage

*Perovskia atriplicifolia* (Russian Sage); foliage is fragrant and silvery

*Pulmonaria* species and hybrids (Bethlehem sage, lungwort): many cultivars with speckled or variegated foliage

*Sedum* species and hybrids (Sedum, stonecrop): cultivars with colored foliage

*Stachys byzantina* (Lambs Ears): hairy, silvery foliage

*Tiarella cordifolia* (Foam flower): cultivars with colored foliage

*Verbascum* species (Mullein): hairy, silvery foliage

*Vinca minor* (Vinca, periwinkle): cultivars with variegated foliage; ground cover

#### Tropicals/succulents

*Acalypha wilkesiana* (Copperleaf): multi-colored leaves

*Agave* species (Century plant): bold, coarse foliage; blue green foliage; cultivars with variegated foliage

*Alpinia zerumbet* (Ginger): cultivars with variegated foliage

*Codiaeum variegatum* (Croton): multi-colored foliage

*Cordyline* species (Cordyline): Spiky foliage; cultivars with colored foliage

*Crinum* species (Crinum lily): spiky foliage; cultivars with colored foliage

*Ensete ventricosum* (Abyssinian banana): large, bold leaves

*Eucalyptus* species (Eucalyptus): blue-green or silvery foliage; foliage is fragrant

*Phorium* species (Phorium): cultivars with purple or variegated foliage

*Musa* species (banana): large, bold foliage; some cultivars with colored foliage

*Ricinus communis* (Castor bean): large, bold foliage; cultivars with red or purple foliage

#### Vegetables and Herbs

*Brassica* species (Cabbage/Kale): several cultivars with colored foliage and/or finely textured foliage

*Capsicum annuum* (Pepper): cultivars with colored foliage

*Cynara cardunculus* (Cardoon, Artichoke): large, bold foliage; silvery foliage

*Lavandula angustifolia* (Lavender): foliage is gray-green and fragrant

*Ocimum basilicum* (basil): many cultivars with filly or colored leaves

*Origanum majorana* (Majoram): cultivars with green and white variegated foliage

*Origanum vulgare* (Oregano): cultivars with green and yellow variegated foliage

*Symphytum* species (comfrey): cultivars with green and yellow variegated leaves