



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 kolomikta (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 (Bigleaf 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 (Phormium): 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