

The Good, the Better, and the Ugly

by George Lasch, April 18, 2013, for APLDWA

The Ugly -- There is no reason to use these problematic plants!	
Groundcovers	
<i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	Not bad per se, but blooms too early to be useful.
<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	Cute in a pot -- demon in the ground!
<i>Microbiota decussata</i>	Looks dead in winter.
<i>Vinca minor</i>	Yawn and prone to dieback and yellowing. Try a newer variegated one!
<i>Viola labradorica purpurea</i>	Weed.
Perennials	
<i>Agapanthus</i> 'Storm Cloud'	Not very hardy; gives the whole genus a bad name.
Agaves	In the perfect location these are great. Otherwise prone to ugly spotting and rotting.
<i>Anemone</i> - Fall types	Fine if you can give them the acreage they need. Thugs. Perhaps in pots? Nope, they sulk!
<i>Angelica atropurpurea</i>	Weedy! But sells well in a pot.
<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i>	Shabby at best. Blooms too early and pushes autumn into summer.
<i>Cordyline</i> sp. Red, green, etc.	Not reliably hardy - call it an annual and move on.
<i>Coreopsis</i> "Red Hybrids"	Not perennial or very good colors. "Plant Porn" victims.
<i>Gaura</i> - dwarf forms	Missing the point of these graceful plants.
<i>Hemerocallis</i>	Seriously sad foliage, constant dead heading, now a nasty gall midge.
<i>Huechera</i> hybrids	The incredible shrinking \$20. Prone to fungal issues and poor growth in the garden.
<i>Iris foetidissima</i>	New rust fungus makes them ugly.
<i>Kalimeris yomena</i>	Looks like a weed -- oh wait, it is one!
<i>Liriope</i> sp.	Under performer here because not enough heat. Prone to fungal issues.
<i>Lysimachia punctata</i> and <i>ciliata</i>	Thugs appearing as cute little things.
<i>Miscanthus</i> sp.	Too much work. Too big too fast. Sheds for months. Shy to bloom on some.
<i>Monarda didyma</i> types	Colorful thugs.
<i>Phormium</i> - most all	Great for a few years and then all dead. Too risky?
<i>Primula polyanthus</i> - "fat and flat "	Built to rot.
Shrubs	
<i>Cistus</i> sp.	Not so hardy and prone to girdling roots and more issues.
<i>Daphne odora</i>	Stop killing floppy sweet things.
<i>Dichroa febrifuga</i>	"Evergreen"? Not really. And poor performance in fruit too.

<i>Forsythia x intermedia</i>	Gangly growth begging to be pruned badly. Color?! Best as an unpruned tall groundcover on a slope.
<i>Helwingia chinensis</i>	Botanical interest only.
<i>Hydrangea</i> 'Invincibelle Spirit'	Sad floppy habit and that color is dull.
<i>Hydrangea</i> 'Endless Summer'	Few flowers and winterkill.
<i>Itea virginica</i>	Colorless flowers in summer. Looks dreadful and half leaved most of the year. Be deciduous or be evergreen!
<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i>	OK in bloom (late) but pretty dull otherwise. And runs permanently!
<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i> 'Variegatus'	Bad variegation burns and mutates readily. Not worth it.
Trees	
<i>Albizia</i> 'Summer Chocolate'	Prone to disfiguring dieback, slow, and just not worth it.
<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	Prone to dieback and short lived.
<i>Clerodendrum trichotomum</i>	Dieback every year. Can be a weedy suckering mess. Foliage reeks.
<i>Cornus florida</i>	Not here -- all those awesome variegated forms marred by Anthracnose.
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Doesn't color well or drop leaves in a timely manner.
<i>Pinus</i> sp.	Sooner or later there will be a disease for all types. No shade. Period.
<i>Styrax japonicus</i>	Tons of ball bearing seeds result in sheets of weedy seedlings. Droll color at the same time as everything else. We can do better.
<i>Trochodendron aralioides</i>	Botanical interest, always looks unthrifty.

The Good -- Tried and True, but there are better	
Groundcovers	
<i>Veronica</i> 'Georgia Blue'	Still good- but can be a bit thin growing.
Perennials	
<i>Acanthus</i> sp.	Great look - but can never get rid of it!
<i>Bergenia</i> sp.	Useful and tough ... but overdone? Newer better ones?
<i>Hostas</i>	Some good ones in there, but also some tragic ones. "Slug resistant", "Sun tolerant", etc. worth a try.
<i>Impatiens omeiana</i>	Great fun - but vigorous! The next thug?
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> CVs	If sited properly they might not flop.
Shrubs	
<i>Buxus</i> sp.	Useful and tolerant - but that smell!
<i>Erysimum</i> 'Bowles Mauve'	Short lived but worth it! Very long blooming. Smaller flowers are less likely to rot.
<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	Can be a bit sullen after winter, but those leaves!
<i>Taxus</i> sp.	Useful but a bit boring.
Trees	
<i>Aralia spinosa</i> and <i>elata</i>	Love the form/foliage etc., but the suckers are devils. Use with caution and containment.

The Better! -- Can't go wrong with these performers	
Groundcovers	
<i>Adiantum venustum</i>	Easy spreading fern.
<i>Chrysosplenium davidii</i>	Golden covering for shade.
<i>Cyclamen coum</i>	Perfect.
<i>Geranium</i> 'Gerwat' aka "Roseanne"	Does what it says it will.
<i>Geranium phaeum</i>	Good grower- colorful leaves. Can be weedy.
<i>Lysimachia congestiflora</i> and similar	Hardy and colorful groundcovers.
<i>Lysimachia pardiformis</i> var. <i>stenophylla</i>	Evergreen groundcover. Tolerant and colorful.
<i>Primula moupinensis</i>	Groundcover for wet sun or shade.
Perennials	
<i>Agapanthus inapertus</i> ssp. <i>pendulus</i> 'Graskop'	Hardy long blooming Agapanthus and in a fab color!
X <i>Amacrinum</i>	Long blooming in fall, showy fragrant blooms.
<i>Anemone blanda</i>	Bright eyes of spring.
<i>Anemone nemerosa</i>	Vigorous grower and spreader, but useful and so colorful!
<i>Aralia cordata</i> 'Sun King'	Fast, lush, golden, and tough.
<i>Aster x frikartii</i>	Long blooming and easy.
<i>Astilbe</i> CVs	From dwarf to giants, they're all good. Watch for spreading types and use correctly.
<i>Beesia deltophylla</i>	Beautiful glossy foliage, tolerates dry shade.
<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i>	Easy, tough, looks good for long season. 'Jack Frost' is great!
<i>Canna</i>	Yes, perennials. Slow to come up but those leaves! Watch out for virused ones.
<i>Cerinthe major purpurascens</i>	Awesome habit and colors. Not really a perennial but will sow in situ.
<i>Cynara cardunculus</i> (artichokes and cardoons)	Easy, fast and bold. (Hmm, sounds like that could be the name of a soap opera.)
<i>Datisca cannabina</i>	Huge texture and fun fruits hanging in curtains.
<i>Eremurus</i> sp.	If happy, they are stunning.
<i>Eucomis</i> sp.	Good garden plants in wide range of conditions. May flop a bit.
<i>Euphorbia</i> 'Blue Haze'	Compact and long blooming.
<i>Euphorbia x martinii</i>	Compact and durable.
<i>Euphorbia rigida</i>	Bold and not as weedy as other euphorbs.
<i>Hedychium</i> sp.	Most are plenty winter hardy and although short-blooming the foliage is worth it!

<i>Iris</i> - Pacifica group	Pacific Coast Iris come in great colors and are solid performers.
<i>Iris unguicularis</i>	Early blooms, nice evergreen foliage.
<i>Kniphofia</i> - any	Long blooming, variety of colors and heights.
<i>Lilium</i> sp.	Most all species and hybrids do very well here. More please!
<i>Molinia caerulea</i> 'Variagata'	Well behaved and long season. My favorite grass.
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Tolerant of wide range of soils. Sturdy, upright. Less aggressive spreader.
<i>Narcissus</i> CVs	Many newer ones are very long blooming and squirrels don't eat them.
<i>Nolina</i> 'La Siberica'	Good texture, fun and tough. Sun please.
<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	Easy fast color. Sow them in situ.
<i>Primula</i> 'Dorothy'	Tough and long blooming.
<i>Primula japonica</i>	Wet tolerant, long blooming, and good foliage.
<i>Primula kisoana</i>	Spreads and with shining colors.
<i>Rheum palmatum</i>	Easy and dramatic.
<i>Scabiosa</i> 'Mariposa Violet'	A true "proven Winner" with long bloom, low habit and good color.
<i>Smyrniium perfoliatum</i>	Easy! Spring! Color! Weedy? Perhaps but easy to remove.
<i>Tulbaghia violacea</i>	Deer proof, long blooming and hardy.
<i>Verbascum</i> sp.	Some are biennials and others short lived perennials. All add needed uprights. Colors too!
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i> 'Color Guard'	Tough and year round bright color. Also 'Garland Gold'
Shrubs	
<i>Arctostaphylos</i>	Xera Plants notes many that are "rain tolerant", seek them.
<i>Billardiera longiflora</i>	Easy, tough and cute evergreen vine. Attractive fruit and edible too!
<i>Cephalotaxus</i> sp.	More interesting than Taxus and deer resistant.
<i>Chamaecyparis obtusa</i>	Easy, durable, pruneable and comes in many colors, shapes, and sizes. Tolerates some shade.
<i>Clerodendrum bungei</i>	Dies back to the ground. Summer heads of bright pink fragrant flowers. Does sucker a bit.
<i>Daphne x transatlantica</i>	Most live up to expectations, and live period!
<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>	Fall color. Period.
<i>Fuchsia</i> 'Genii'	Big, long blooming and golden.
<i>Fuchsia</i> 'Lechlade Magician'	Early blooming and big plants and fast! Sun please.
<i>Hedera colchica</i>	Fast, tough and shade tolerant.
<i>Hydrangea serrata</i>	Smaller graceful woodland beauties.
<i>Mahonia x media</i>	Tough, early blooming and spiny, perfect for that alley! Hummingbird magnet in winter.
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	Big fast leaves. Or lovely blooms early. Can keep small by coppicing.
<i>Spirea</i> - colored foliage types	Easy and perform well. Learn to prune and enjoy.
<i>Trachelospermum asiaticum</i> 'Ogon Nishiki'	Evergreen vine. Colorful year round, hardier than credited.

Trees	
<i>Cornus</i> hybrids	Most are clean and vigorous, a bit more than the tag says!
<i>Cotinus</i> 'Young Lady'	Long blooming on NEW wood.
<i>Cryptomeria japonica</i>	Does well. Fond of 'Sekkan-Sugi'. Good habit. Except in snow!
<i>Disanthus cercidifolius</i>	Perfect small tree -- graceful habit, early flowers, great fall color.
<i>Magnolia sieboldii</i>	Good habit and fragrant bloom over a long season. Easy.
<i>Paulownia tomentosa</i>	Big fast leaves. Or lovely blooms early. Can keep small by coppicing.
<i>Stewartia</i> sp.	Another perfect tree -- year round performer.