KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“The Winter Landscape Garden”

November 16, 2021

Often when gardening, we are faced with unintended consequences. The beautiful perennial flower that self-seeds until it becomes a weed, the plant that scorches in too much sun, not to mention the animals that have smelled our garden salad bowls. But what about good unintended consequences? Those happen, too.

This winter the Hollinshead Water-wise Garden is an example of the many beauties that can be found in the winter garden. First intended to be a public classroom for water conservation, the unintended consequence is a group of plants, some accustomed enough to low water and dry air to also be able to handle the cold winters. They provide structure in the garden and reassurance in our souls that the light will return.

As you are planning your spring landscapes, start right now with what you want to see next winter. The tried-and-true candidates that stay green are the conifers. Juniper, pine and spruce all have various sizes and shapes, water, light and soil requirements, so research carefully, for these plants will provide winter structure for years to come. Then there are plants that retain some winter color. Sedums can range from yellow to pink to rusty red in winter. And hardy Hydrangeas keep translucent flowers that seem to hold the light.

Consider topography. Are there ways to create small rises or depressions that look interesting in the snow? Do you want to arrange a faux stream bed, or create separate planting beds for annuals or perennials? There are many design choices if you’re starting a new landscape, but an established garden can be approached with a new perspective in winter.

Other choices for structure in winter gardens are big grasses. The native Great Basin Rye will bend over and take over a large space nicely. The ‘Karl Forester’ is an upright grass, commonly seen in commercial landscapes sheared like a broom. It eventually needs to be trimmed in the spring to allow new growth, but if left up, it’s a focal point in the winter.

Big shrubs and deciduous trees can provide structure and interest as well, and many provide winter berries for birds. Most small crabapple varieties leave their red or orange berries on graceful branches. Something interesting to look at in our gardens during our long winters is another way gardens can enrich us. The Hollinshead Water-wise Garden is an example of the good kind of unintended consequence, the unintended beauty of a winter landscape garden.

The Hollinshead Water-wise Garden is located in Bend’s Hollinshead Park at 1235 Jones Road. Every plant has a sign with its name and irrigation information. If you live near Redmond, you can visit another demonstration garden managed by the OSU Master Gardeners and open to the public at the OSU Extension Office on the Deschutes County Fairgrounds at the north end, near parking lot D.

And if you would like more information about water-wise gardening or any other horticulture topic, visit our website at [www.gocomga.com](http://www.gocomga.com) and look for the KPOV tab on the orange bar. This has been Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV’s The Point.

Resources:

Water-wise Gardening in Central Oregon, OSU EM 9136 <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9136>

City of Bend WaterWise Guides <https://www.bendoregon.gov/government/departments/utilities/conservation/waterwise-guides>