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### **Colorful Plants for the Late Winter Landscape**

You don't have to wait for spring to have color in your landscape. There are several plants that can brighten the final weeks of winter with their blooms and leaf and stem color.

For a splash of yellow try Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia*). Witch Hazel's blooms are fragrant, golden-yellow and resemble shredded coconut or spiders. They appear on bare branches as early as February and can last through March. This 12 –15' tall shrub tends towards a loose, open form with angular branches so it is best suited for informal gardens. Bring the flowering stems inside for a fragrant winter bouquet. Witch Hazel prefers full sun or light shade, soil rich in organic matter and moderate water. Their pruning needs are minimal – prune to guide growth and to remove poorly placed branches.

If red is your color then Red Twig Dogwood is your plant – so named for the brilliant red of this shrub's young stems. The blood red stems make a bold statement fall through spring and look especially colorful against snow. In spring, Red Twig Dogwood is covered in clusters of pure white flowers. Late summer brings blue berries that birds relish, followed by fall's display of red foliage. For dramatic color, plant Red Twig Dogwood so the red stems mix with the yellow flowers of Witch Hazel, or let it mingle with the yellow stems of Yellow Twig Dogwood. Dogwoods are available in many varieties, including *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' – a medium-sized shrub at 7' tall by 5' wide, with deep green foliage and coral red stems (in stock now) and *C. alba* 'Ivory Halo' – slightly smaller at 6' tall x 6' wide, with variegated foliage and carmine red stems (available in spring). Dogwood does best in moist, rich soil with protection from the afternoon sun.

The foliage of Heavenly bamboo (*Nandina domestica*) brings a dash of red to winter gardens. New spring growth emerges bronze, matures to blue-green, turning orange-red in fall. The red leaf color is retained through winter and even deepens with cold weather. Nandinas bloom in the spring with creamy white blossoms and if planted in groups will produce shiny red berries. *Nandina* 'Gulf Stream' is a great new selection – compact and reaching only 3' high by 3' wide, making it an excellent choice for informal hedges or foundation plantings. *Nandina* prefers sun to part shade and rich soil. It is drought tolerant once established but does best with moderate irrigation.

