

## ***The Pewter Garden***

**Garden Moods:** Have you ever noticed the distinctive moods a garden displays according to the season? Our landscapes have a way of communicating through their ever-changing flora. In spring, the green foliage exuberantly awakens the garden after a long winter's nap. By summer, the vast amount of lush greenness simply glows, transforming the garden into a captivating setting. As fall approaches, there is softness in the air, for the days and nights are quieter. Now, the garden puts on one last vivacious display – the magnificent and breathtaking jewel-tone hues that radiate from the garden. When winter arrives, all is muted, but the garden is still very expressive. Now its true profile is shown, revealing all the intricate directions its varied branches take.



**Winter Beauty Does Exist:** The beauty of a garden in winter is more subtle and perhaps we need to look a little closer in order to really see and appreciate its many facets. Although it is different, there is a lot of interest and life in the “pewter garden,” as now it expresses its latent shape. Many trees, shrubs, and perennials exhibit great winter appeal through textural interest, color, and sculptural silhouettes. Some have unique branching patterns that are clearly seen when their leaves have fallen and are outlined with snow. The garden now glistens with prisms of light from this wintry shield. These dormant months are often pictured as a desolate time, but with the right combination of plants, you can create interest and add life to your garden. Wildlife, which need the garden all year round, will also benefit from adding winter interest. It is important that we be able to enjoy our gardens in all the seasons.

**Think Winterscape:** Evergreens (Pine, Spruce, Juniper, and Cedar) will take on a new appearance as their needle-like foliage is blanketed by a layer of snow. The key to using evergreens is to vary their heights and intertwine them with other winter-colored shrubs and perennials. Plants that will work best in the winter should include characteristics such as colorful berries (Winterberry) that attract birds, interesting branching patterns, textured and colorful bark, and perhaps a delicate form that will catch snow uniquely, standing out in the winter setting. Consider leaving your grasses untrimmed for the season and their wispy, arching habit and dried plumes can provide texture to a bleak winterscape. Additionally, their rustles will add movement and sound to a muted world.

**Add Winter Color:** It is well-known that evergreens are invaluable in the winter landscape. Hollies are especially admired for their striking foliage and vibrant berries. Red Twig Dogwoods is a winner in the landscape for its bark, which ranges in color from red to burgundy. Yellow Twig Dogwood is also a must have for its unusually bright yellow bark. A grouping of either of these contrasting dogwoods against a backdrop of pristine snow makes a great winter scene. The dried, rosy flower heads of some Sedums and Hydrangeas will preserve well into winter, adding another element. But the color doesn't end there – consider adding winter flowering trees, such as Cornelian Cherry and Winter Hazel. That's right; there are some trees that boom late winter/early spring! Their presence will add a little joy and spirit and start the countdown to spring's arrival.

**Make It Show:** One tree in particular, Birch, has a lasting effect for winter interest due to its characteristic bark. Other showy types are Paperbark Maples, London Planes, and Stewartias. The best way to really showcase a tree's intriguing bark patterns is through outdoor lighting. Different textured bark (exfoliating, textured, colored reflective) needs different angles of lighting to capture the essence of the detail. Consider having outdoor lighting especially in the winter months to highlight these features and continue the interest all through the night!

**Stop & Take Note:** All of these wonderful plants are a glimpse of how spectacular and intriguing a winterscape can be. Adding textural interest, color, and plants with unique silhouettes, can be accomplished by simply tucking in a few varieties of trees, shrubs, and perennials. But don't feel you have to redesign your garden. A lot of these qualities probably already exist in your yard. While the classic aromas of wood burning fill the quiet air, signifying the start of winter in the Hamptons, stop and take note of the winter qualities emerging in your landscape. You might be surprised at what you see!