

Garden



Gardener's Cuttings

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Late-winter flowering shrubs

When the days are short and dark, the weather outside cold and gloomy, the one thing guaranteed to lift my spirits are the late-winter flowering shrubs. We have a great selection of them in the garden, including *Salix gracilistyla* 'Mount Aso', *Daphne* spp, *Sarcococca* spp, *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' and *Chimonanthus praecox* which offer scent and flowers all through the season.

Last autumn we planted witch hazels, *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Arnold Promise',

'Ruben' and 'Orange Beauty' in different locations around the garden. These large shrubs are unremarkable during the summer - then autumn arrives turning their foliage into stunning, vibrant colours. This is followed by displays of fragrant, spidery blooms, appearing on bare branches for many weeks in late winter and early spring in yellows, oranges, and reds-reminiscent of warm, fireside flames.

One of my favourite plants, however, is our winter flowering honeysuckle, *Lonicera* x



Pink fluffy catkins belonging to *Salix gracilistyla* 'Mount Aso'



The bright, spidery flowers of *Hamamelis* 'Arnold Promise'



The vibrant autumn colours of *Hamamelis* 'Arnold Promise'

purpusii 'Winter Beauty'. Particularly loved by bumble bees it provides a valuable nectar source when all else is scarce. It is semi-evergreen, so retains some of its foliage throughout winter and produces creamy white tubular flowers that smell delicious! *Lonicera purpusii* is a cross between *L. fragrantissima* and *L. standishii* both originating from China. These winter honeysuckle early blooms symbolise resilience and hope, two qualities in short supply on a damp dark day in January.

Another favourite is *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, sometimes known as yellow Daphne (they are closely related in the same family, *Thymalaceae*). From the woodlands of the far east, this gorgeous plant produces soft, silvery, downy buds on bare branches, from which clusters of highly fragrant yellow flowers emerge. Preferring a sheltered spot, we have them nestled amongst the roses in the meadow at the top of the garden.

The appearance of these flowers with intoxicating scents in the depths of winter evoke the promise of spring's imminent arrival, and with it the reawakening of nature. A reminder that a new year is beginning.



The sweetly scented, delicate blooms of *Lonicera* 'Winter Beauty'



Edgeworthia chrysantha's rounded inflorescences