

Hedgehog Hall Autumn Colour October 2020

Hello I'm Janet Rowe and for those of you who have not visited Hedgehog Hall we are located in an old sand and gravel quarry at Tilton on the Hill Leicestershire. We are situated 700ft above sea level and our house and garden are tucked down below the brow of the hill. This allows for the prevailing wind to hurtle over and down our long drive, leaving us with a micro climate around our house.



On the side of the old quarry, which is North East facing, we have over the past 19 years built many retaining walls and terraces. (that is my husband Andrew has). This part of the garden has text book drainage, very free draining but moist. It has much improved sand and gravel with an under ground spring running through and down these borders. I have a large collection of Galanthus growing on the slopes. The rest of the garden, which is flat, is South East facing apart from our Courtyard Garden. The courtyard houses my collection of Hostas, Ferns and seven Japanese Acers, it is quite protected from the midday sun and more importantly the wind. All our plants and trees in the courtyard are in terracotta pots and all stand on pot feet for the winter making sure they are off the ground, free draining and away from frost. In the spring all of my Hostas sit in pot trays filled with water.

Autumn colour has been stunning at Hedgehog Hall this year, particularly in the courtyard.

Euonymus alatus compactus (left) has packed a punch of the most intense red leaves, its like a beacon glowing in the garden, I can see why it is often called the Burning Bush. I am particularly fond of this small shrub and have three planted around the garden that can be viewed from the house. I would highly recommend it for a small or large garden.



Cercis canadensis Ruby Fall (left) is a good compact weeping tree. It has a good three seasons of interest, March to April the purple pink flowers emerge on bare stems, heart shaped red leaves appearing in spring. Leaves turn a burgundy through summer and then the firework display of oranges, yellows, reds shout out ' Look at me'. In the autumn. We also have a Cercis canadensis Forest Pansy which also struts its colour at this time.



Of all of my Japanese Acers I **think Acer palmatum Osakazuki** (right) must be one of the best for all round interest. In spring its leaves which are seven lobed are a vibrant fresh green tinged at the edges with orange but in September it transforms into a blaze of vibrant fiery scarlet, creating the most amazing drama. The colour is long lasting and stays looking wonderful for at least six weeks. I have it placed so that I can see it from my lounge French windows, it is back lit by the late setting sun. This tree has been awarded the RHS Award of Garden Merit.



Acer palmatum Sango-kaku (left) is another personal favorite of mine, it looks fabulous all year round. In spring its leaves, which are lobed and deeply cut, emerge yellow/orange turning to a light green for summer. The foliage turns a very soft butter yellow for its Autumn Colour, just wow,!!! especially when back lit. However that's not the end as Sangokaku is also known as the Coral Bark Maple - it has the most striking coral pink - red trunk and stems which just glow through winter. Also as it starts to bud up for next year's growth, these small buds are the brightest pink in colour and catch the light beautifully particularly when covered in rain droplets. It's no surprise to know that this tree also has the RHS Award of Garden Merit.

Acers are very good in pots but you must water extremely well through out the growing season and also make sure that they don't dry out in winter. I feed mine in spring with a slow release food just before the leaves emerge. I also pay attention to pot size you will soon know when they need a new house. Most of my acers are now aged between 10 and 18 years and are doing very well.



I have another two Acers that I would not be without for colour and presence. They perform throughout the growing season and they are **Acer shirasawanum Jordon** (left) and **Acer palmatum Bloodgood**.(right)

A quick photo sweep around the garden for more autumn colour:-



Cornus sanguinea Winter Beauty (above left) showing its lovely autumn foliage yellow /orange before dropping its leaves to show its beautiful and remarkable flame coloured stems.

Cotinus Grace (above right) is just beginning to turn from its summer burgundy leaves to its intense scarlet. I cut this shrub hard back in early spring to within two or three buds. This helps to keep the leaves large with more impact particularly in the Autumn, it also helps to keep its vigorous growth in check. If left it will easily reach 6 metres.



Persicaria affinis Darjeeling Red (left) I love this little plant it grows on my terraced walls and trails over almost touching the ground. It flowers for at least 4 months and then turns a stunning red in autumn.



Euphorbia griffithii Dixter. (right) Such a showy plant, right from when it first emerges from the ground looking rather like a pink peony bud or even a pink asparagus shoot. It develops reddish bronze stems and dark green foliage flushed with copper red tints, topped with burnt orange blooms. Its fiery autumn colours of scarlet, yellows and oranges are quite spectacular.



Nandina domestica Fire Power (above) also known as Heavenly Bamboo. This little compact shrub is a delight, it bears conical clusters of star shaped white flowers in summer, in the autumn the leaves turn shades of red and copper orange. The flowers are followed by shiny scarlet fruits. It really earns its space in any garden, with such interest over many seasons. It does however need a slightly protected site away from cold winds. Finally we come to an end of my Autumn Colour with a **Hosta** putting on its own show sprinkled with the scarlet leaves of **Acer Osakazuki** (below)

