Utah State University
DigitalCommons@USU

All Archived Publications | Archived USU Extension Publications

1-1-2001

Plants Not To Buy

Dennis Hinkamp
Utah State University

Warning: The information in this series may be obsolete. It is presented here for historical purposes only. For the most up to date information please visit The Utah State University Cooperative Extension Office

Recommended Citation
Hinkamp, Dennis, "Plants Not To Buy" (2001). *All Archived Publications.* Paper 791.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/791

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Archived USU Extension Publications at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Archived Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usu.edu.

Utah State University Extension
electronic publishing

GARDEN NOTES

PLANTS NOT TO BUY

By Dennis Hinkamp

January 2001 Winter-21

Think "buy the dog not the puppy" when planning your garden. Many of the cutest looking plants in the catalogs and nurseries grow up to be a threat to your sanity.

"Although most plants are susceptible to problems and can die without warning, there are a few I would recommend avoiding this coming year as you select plants for your landscape," says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. "I see them every year as they are thrown on my desk by disgruntled homeowners. Without exception, all of these plants looked great when they were still in the potting soil."

All poplar trees have problems, he says. This includes cottonwoods, cotton-less (for a few years) cottonwoods. They all have short life spans, are susceptible to borers and various diseases, and they often grow to skyscraper heights.

"There are a few other plants that people are often disgusted with after a few years of putting up with them in their landscape," he adds. "One I often bad-mouth is pyracantha. The thorns are notorious for ripping apart nylons, gloves or even a Ford that strays into its territory. Apart from the thorns, and its unfriendly attitude toward pruning, pyracantha is prone to fire blight disease. It also loves to collect garbage in its branches, and it suffers from some dieback when there is a cold winter."

A large juniper is another plant that overtakes landscapes and is a real pain to prune, Goodspeed says. Some juniper shrubs can grow to more than 6 feet, with a spread of more than 10 feet. If it's an evergreen you want, consider the groundcover juniper, or a dwarf fir, pine or spruce.

"After a few ugly years, many junipers add insult to injury by allowing a few branches to turn brown and die," he adds. "Junipers are also famous for collecting garbage, spiders, cats, rodents and occasionally soccer balls. They tend to outgrow their beds and reach across sidewalks and driveways in an attempt to intimidate any visitors."

An equally scary plant is the Arctic blue willow, Goodspeed says. This is a nice plant for about 10 minutes, then it begins to grow at an alarming rate. If you want a shrub that is a fast-growing, informal, hedge and can get really ugly with dieback, this one is perfect. Actually, it can be grown as a windbreak on acreage, and it establishes quite quickly. However, for most

landscapes, it is too monstrous and repulsive.

"The last plant I want to cast aspersions on is the silver maple," he says. "This troublesome tree is indeed a fast grower and creates shade in a matter of days, but it is also messy and likes to destroy sidewalks, driveways and ruin smooth lawns. The roots are invasive and can do a lot of damage to anything within their grasp."

Silver maples also have an over-abundance of leaves, which wouldn't be bad if they all dropped at once, he says. But this cranky tree likes to spread out your leaf raking over the entire fall, and on a good year, it can go well into the winter. This tree is also very susceptible to iron chlorosis and can get verticillium wilt.

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person other wise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work. Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Jack M. Payne, Vice President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University. (EP/01/2001/DF)