

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Nassau County



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List of Dwarf Shrubs and Low-Growing Plants Suitable for Foundation Plantings

3 Feet or Less

(* includes those plants that are drought-tolerant)

Abelia X grandiflora

Glossy Abelia 3-5'
Semi-evergreen shrub of extended bloom. Profuse pale pink to white panicles, opening in mid to later summer and lasting through September. Persisting maroon-brick calyxes and bronze-purple fall and winter leaf color. Useful as a colorful variation in border and foundation plantings and for massing or hedge work because of its density.

Amorpha canescens

Leadplant * 3'
Trouble-free plant for poor, dry soils that provides color variation outside of the norm—blue-clustered flower spikes in July and fine-textured gray-green compound foliage during the growing season. An out-of-the-ordinary specimen for the border.

Berberis buxifolia 'pygmaea'

Dwarf Magellan Barberrry 18"
The foliage of this plant is evergreen and reddish-green in color. It is excellent for use as a specimen plant, a low hedge or in foundation plantings. It is one of the hardiest evergreen barberries. The winter twigs are thorny.

Berberis candidula

Palesleaf Barberrry 2'
The flowers of this plant are bright yellow and appear in May. Purplish berries form in the fall. The foliage is evergreen. The winter twigs are thorny.

Bruckenthalia spiculifolia

Balkan Spike Heath 10"
It has pale flowers on spikes in mid-June and the foliage is evergreen. Its best use is in rock gardens.

Buxus microphylla 'Compacta'

Littleleaf Boxwood 12"
The foliage is evergreen and very dense. Much broader than tall.

Buxus sempervirens 'Suffruticosa'

Common Edging Boxwood 3'
It is dense, compact and slow-growing. An excellent edging material.

Calluna vulgaris

Heather * 6-12"
The flowers vary from white to red and bloom in the summer and early fall. The foliage is evergreen with various autumn colors. Use as a ground cover or low-growing foundation plant.

Caryopteris X clandonensis

Bluebeard * 3'
Late summer flowering deciduous shrub with grayish foliage. The clusters of slender blue spikes provide interesting color to the landscape.

Chaenomeles japonica (dwarf or prostrate forms)

Flowering Quince * 3'
The flowers in shades of red, pink and orange appear in early May. The variety 'Alpina' is only 1' high and very dense. This variety has orange flowers.

Chamaecyparis obtusa (dwarf varieties) and *C. pisifera* (dwarf varieties)

Dwarf Fall Cypress 3'
Dwarf evergreen shrubs with varying colored foliage. Useful as individual specimens in a garden of low shrubs and evergreens. Good rock garden specimen.

Comptonia peregrina

Sweet Fern * 18"
This close relative of *Myrica* (bayberry), with its pleasantly scented foliage, is found growing wild in sandy, droughty, infertile locations. Its low thicket-forming habit and fern-like leaves should make it a very popular subject for localized naturalistic landscaping. Transplanting is difficult unless container-grown.

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<i>Cotoneaster apiculatus</i> Cranberry Cotoneaster * 3' Similar to <i>C. horizontalis</i> in its uses and habit of growth. With larger fruit to 3/8" diameter.	<i>Daphne cneorum</i> Rose Daphne * 10" The clustered flowers are a bright rosy-pink and fragrant. Daphne forms a dense evergreen mat.
<i>Cotoneaster dammeri</i> Bearberry Cotoneaster * 3' The flowers are small, white and appear in early June. Bright red berries appear in the fall. The plant has a prostrate trailing habit.	<i>Daphne mezereum</i> February Daphne 3' The flowers are lilac to rosy-purple, very fragrant and appear in early April before the leaves. Scarlet berries also add seasonal interest.
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i> Rock Spray * 1' The flowers are small, pinkish and appear in mid-June. Red berries appear in early Fall. A semi-evergreen plant with flat horizontal branches that is extremely adaptable to rock gardens, banks, low foundation plantings or small borders.	<i>Elsholtzia stauntonii</i> 3' Maintenance-free shrubs that can be pruned back to the base in spring and reflower profusely that same year in late summer (August and September). Loose, terminal spikes of lilac-purple and aromatic foliage are the main attributes of this plant.
<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i> Small-leaved Cotoneaster 3' The flowers are small and white and appear in June. The fruit is scarlet and is effective in the fall. The plant, with its lustrous evergreen leaves, makes a good foliage mat in the foreground of shrubby borders or growing over a rock or wall.	<i>Erica carnea</i> and varieties Spring Heath 1/2-1' The flowers vary from white to pinks, reds and crimson and are borne in upright racemes from January to May. The foliage is needle-like and evergreen.
<i>Cytisus multiflorus</i> Portuguese Broom * 1' The flowers are white or yellowish white and appear in late June. The green twigs are effective during the winter months.	<i>Euonymus nanus var. turkestanicus</i> Dwarf Euonymus 3' Deciduous, often procumbent shrub with whorled leaves and interesting pink fruit capules that appear in fall. Good for planting on rocky slopes.
<i>Cytisus x 'Beanii'</i> Bean's Broom * 18" The flowers are a deep golden yellow and appear in early May. The twigs are green and semi-prostrate. The plant grows 2 to 3 times as broad as high.	<i>Forsythia viridissima 'Bronxensis'</i> Bronx Forsythia 2' Extremely dwarf habit with erect branches and dependable spring flowering.
<i>Cytisus nigricans</i> Spike Broom* 3' The yellowish flowers appear in early July. Very consistent, profuse bloomer. The winter twigs are green.	<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i> Dwarf Fothergilla 3' The flowers are white and borne in 1" long terminal spikes. The plant blooms in mid-May. The fall color is a brilliant yellow to scarlet. It is a good plant to use in front of an evergreen planting. Native to Southeastern U.S.
<i>Cytisus purgans</i> Provence Broom * 3' Deep golden yellow fragrant flowers in mid-May. The winter twigs are green; branching habit very dense and upright.	<i>Genista pilosa</i> * 1' A low-growing genus requiring poor soils of a sandy, dry nature. Profusions of bright yellow pea-like flowers appear in May, camouflaging the silvery-green arching stems. Useful in ground cover settings because of its interesting texture and color. This shade-tolerant species is difficult to transplant once established—a problem associated with most genistas.
<i>Cytisus purpureus</i> Purple Broom * 3' The purple flowers appear in mid-May. It is unique among <i>Cytisus</i> because of its purple flowers. Effective in the foreground of a foundation planting.	<i>Genista tinctoria</i> 3' Similar to the above except taller and with brighter green foliar and twig coloration. Appearance of yellow pea-like flowers is delayed until June, with sporadic reappearance throughout the summer.
<i>Daboecia cantabrica</i> Irish Heath 1 1/2' The flowers are purple to white, depending on the variety, and appear continuously during the summer. The foliage is evergreen; glossy above and white fuzz beneath.	<i>Hypericum X moserianum</i> Gold Flower, Moser's St. Johnswort 2' Single yellow 2-1/2" diameter flowers with reddish anthers. Blooms intermittently from July through October. Dwarf deciduous shrub with arching branches.

<i>Hypericum patulum</i> 'Henryi', <i>H. Forrestii</i> H. 'Hidcote' and other hardy varieties St. Johnswort	2-3'	<i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> 'Compactum' Compact Oregon Hollygrape	2'
Large, single, yellow flowers borne profusely from July to October. Compact, semi-evergreen shrub for foundation planting or border.		The flowers are bright yellow, borne in spikes and appear in early May. The fruit is bluish-black and is effective during the summer and fall. The evergreen foliage turns a bronze color in winter. Select a protected winter location.	
<i>Ilex crenata</i> 'Helleri' and <i>I.c.</i> 'Stokes'	3'	<i>Mahonia repens</i> Creeping Hollygrape	12"
Dwarf, densely compact form of the Japanese Holly. Evergreen.		The flowers are small and yellow and the fruit is black. Makes a good ground cover; otherwise select the <i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> .	
<i>Ilex crenata</i> 'Kingsville'	12"	<i>Paxistima canbyi</i> Canby Paxistima	12"
Very dwarf, compact form of the Japanese Holly. Very hardy. Grows wider than high.		The foliage is evergreen and the fall color is bronze. Plant to use in groups in the foundation planting or for formal dwarf edging.	
<i>Jasminum nudiflorum</i> Winter Jasmine *	3-5'	<i>Picea abies</i> - dwarf varieties *	
Hardest of the jasmine, <i>J. nudiflorum</i> beckons the spring-flowering season in February and March with bright yellow forsythia-like flowers borne on bright green arching stems. Overall habit is trailing, with massed branches that overlap each other.		Norway Spruce	
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i> vars. <i>sargentii</i> Sargent Juniper *	12"	• 'Clanbrassiliana' (A wide-spreading rounded form)	2 1/2'
Lilac berries appear in the fall. A low prostrate juniper with steel blue evergreen foliage. Makes excellent rounded "mats" or massed as a ground cover.		• 'Maxwellii' (The common form is low and mound-like)	
<i>Juniperus conferta</i> Shore Juniper *	1'	• 'Nidiformis' Bird's Nest Spruce (An upright grower with a flat top)	3'
An evergreen needle-like juniper that grows very well in dry sandy soil. For ground cover use.		• 'Procumbens' (One of the lowest forms)	1'-2'
<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Douglasii' Waukegan Juniper *	18"	<i>Picea pungens</i> - dwarf varieties *	
Steel blue foliage		Dwarf, procumbent, horizontally-branched forms of blue spruce.	
<i>Juniperus horizontalis</i> 'Wiltonii' (Blue Rug), J. 'Bar Harbor' and other prostrate forms *	6-12"	<i>Pinus mugo</i> - dwarf varieties *	
Useful as ground covers.		Prostrate horizontally-branched forms of the mugo pine.	
<i>Kalmia angustifolia</i> Sheep Laurel	3'	<i>Pinus</i> spp. - dwarf cultivars and varieties *	
Flowers are rosy red to crimson and appear in mid-June. The foliage is evergreen. The plant's greatest value is its ability to grow in wet soils.		(most varieties)	2-4'
<i>Leucothoe fontanesiana</i> 'Nana' Dwarf Drooping Leucothoe	2'	Many dwarf forms are available of all the common species of pine.	
Has small white waxy flowers in early June. The foliage is evergreen and the fall color is bronze. Best in shade.		<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i> Bush Cinquefoil *	2-4'
<i>Lonicera alpigena</i> 'Nana' Dwarf Alps Honeysuckle	3'	Deciduous, densely-branched, sun-loving shrubs that bloom for 3 or more months in the summer. Flowers are white to yellow, 1/2- 1" in diameter. Many varieties available.	
A variety with erect branches and bright red, drooping, cherry-like fruit.		<i>Pyracantha</i> - dwarf varieties *	
		<i>Rhododendron</i> - dwarf species and varieties	1-3'
		Prostrate, low-growing form of azaleas; useful when planted in groups of 3 or more in collections.	
		<i>Salix repens</i> Creeping Willow	3'
		Low shrubs with procumbent branches. Silky leaves beneath. Useful in poor, moist soil or corner of a rock garden.	

Skimmia japonica and *Skimmia reevesiana*
Japanese Skimmia and
Reeves Skimmia 1 1/2'
Dark evergreen foliage on a low, compact plant. Dull
crimson-red fruit is effective from fall through spring.
Flowers are dioecious, on *S. japonica*.

Spiraea albiflora
Japanese White Spirea * 2'
Dense, compact shrub flowering in July. White flowers
in 1-1/2-2" diameter, flat to round clusters.

Spiraea X bumalda varieties
Bumald Spirea * 2'
Arched branches. Period and duration of bloom make
this shrub excellent for the foreground of the foundation
planting or border. Flat cluster of pink to crimson
flowers.

Symphoricarpos X chenaultii
Chenault Coralberry * 3'
Small, inconspicuous pink flowering spikes and attrac-
tive red berries in fall. Excellent for a border planting.

Taxus spp. dwarf cultivars
and varieties up to 3'
Compact, densely-branched dwarfs of the English and
Japanese yew. Effective as individual specimens in
the rockery or dwarf collections.

Teucrium chamaedrys
Wall Germander 3'
Dwarf evergreen shrub useful in the foreground of
plantings or as a low formal hedge or edging in the
garden.

Thuja occidentalis dwarf varieties
and cultivars * 3'
Dwarf forms of American Arborvitae. Dwarf evergreen
shrubs with foliar color ranging from shades of green to
yellow. Useful as individual specimens in the rockery,
miniature border or dwarf collection.

Vaccinium pallidum
Dryland Blueberry * 3'
Dwarf species with arching branches and brilliant scar-
let fall color. Performs best in dry, well-drained soils.

Viburnum opulus 'Nanum'
Dwarf European Cranberrybush 2'
Dense, tufted habit with irregular branching. Seldom
flowers. Useful as an individual specimen or grouping
of 3 plants.

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