



Throughout Kentucky, the lush green leaves of summer begin to change into a myriad of colors in fall.

Many factors can affect the quality of the colors that our trees and shrubs can turn, but the color or range of colors is primarily dictated by the variety of the tree or shrub. Peak fall color in Kentucky usually occurs between October 20th and November 1st. During this time, you will see the best colors high in the trees, and as Halloween nears the leaves will begin covering the ground. No matter what time of year you plant, consider what colors your new trees or landscape plants will turn in the fall when making your planting selections. The following is a list of our favorite plants with outstanding fall color.

SHRUBS, GRASSES, PERENNIALS, AND VINES

Amsonia

Perennial. Vibrant golden yellow. Very striking.

Autumn Brilliance Fern

Perennial. Beautiful red spores are produced on the leaves to give a fantastic fall showing.

Azalea

Shrub. Depending on the variety they will transition through various shades of gold, orange, scarlet, red, and burgundy.

Blueberry (Vaccinium)

Shrub. Variability between cultivars, but usually yellow, orange, or wine red.

Boston Ivy (Parthenocissus)

Vine. Rich glossy red.

Bottlebrush Buckeye

Shrub. Rich, buttery yellow.

Chokeberry (Aronia)

Shrub. Purple to red leaves with black berries.

Deciduous Holly (Ilex verticulata)

Shrub. Nice yellow foliage followed by a stunning showing of red, peach, orange, or gold berries depending on the cultivar.

Epimedium

Perennial. Bright yellow-orange to deep burgundy red.

Fothergilla

Shrub. Some variability between cultivars but usually red and orange mixed throughout shrub.

Hardy Geranium 'Karmina'

Perennial. Hues of ruby and russet reds.

Hydrangea

Oakleaf Hydrangea (quercifolia) - Red to brick red.

Panicle Hydrangea 'Quick Fire' (paniculate) -

Dark rosy pink blooms.

Big Leaf Hydrangea (macrophylla) -

Orange and red shades.

Little Blue Stem (Schizachyrium)

Grass. Beautiful blue summer foliage has red, yellow, or burnt orange hues in the fall.

Plumbago

Perennial. Bronze and red hues.

Redtwig Dogwood (Cornus)

Shrub. Brilliant red to reddish purple. Depending on the variety, stems turn bright red, yellow, or orange as temperatures drop in late fall/early winter.

Spicebush (Lindera)

Shrub. Clear yellow. Reliable color year after year.

Spirea (Spiraea)

Shrub. Some variability is based on the cultivar, but usually strong orange and yellow.

Summersweet (Clethra)

Shrub. Bright yellow.

Sweetspire (Itea)

Shrub. Variability between cultivars, but usually red to reddish purple.

Switchgrass (Panicum)

Grass. Variability is based on the cultivar, but usually reddish-brown, burgundy, and wine hues.

Viburnum

Shrub. Hues of red.

MEDIUM TO SMALL ORNAMENTAL TREES AND LARGE SHRUBS**Flowering Cherries (Prunus)**

Subhirtella (weeping, autumnalis)- soft yellow.
Yedoensis (Yoshino, Akebono)- Yellow/golden yellow.

Crabapple (Malus)

Some variability between cultivars but usually yellow to orange-yellow. Most cultivars also have persistent fruit that is attractive in winter.

Crapemyrtle (Lagerstroemia)

Some variability between cultivars but usually red, orange, and yellow are mixed throughout the tree.

Dogwood (Cornus)

Flowering/Native- Red to reddish purple.
Chinese/Kousa- Orange-red to red.

Japanese Maple (Acer palmatum)

Green Leaved Forms- Yellow to yellow-orange.
Red Leaved Forms- Red to reddish-orange.

Linden (Tilia)

Yellow to yellow-green.

Parrotia

Red to yellow-orange. Consistently very good.

Redbud (Cercis)

Yellow to soft yellow-orange.

Serviceberry (Amelanchier)

Orange and red.

Smoketree (Cotinus)

Yellow to orange-red. Royal Purple- scarlet red.

Witchhazel (Hamamelis)

Yellow with some orange or red.

Yellowwood (Cladrastis)

Yellow to golden yellow.

LARGE SHADE TREES**Blackgum/Tupelo (Nyssa)**

Strong red to reddish-orange. Considered one of the best trees for fall color.

Elm (Ulmus)

Most elms have yellow fall color of varying quality.
Frontier Elm- Red to reddish purple.
Lacebark Elm- Red/orange with some yellow.

Ginkgo (male cvs.)

Bright yellow to golden yellow. Leaves tend to drop all at once.

Hornbeam (Carpinus)

Native/American- Red, orange, and yellow are mixed throughout the tree.
European- Yellow to orange.

Katsura (Cercidiphyllum)

Yellow to orange with some red. Leaves smell like baking cookies as they change color in fall.

Maples (Acer)

Red Maple- Red to reddish-orange. The quality and intensity of the color vary between cultivars.
Sugar Maple- Orange to yellow. The quality and intensity of color vary between cultivars.

Oaks (Quercus)

White Oak- Variable but usually is red with some orange.
Swamp White Oak- Variable but usually yellow with some orange and red.
Willow Oak- Yellow to orange.
Red Oak- Red to rust-colored.
Scarlet Oak- Strong, bright red.

Pistache (Pistacia)

Orange-red to red. Long-lasting.

Sassafras

Yellow, orange, red, and purple are all mixed throughout the tree. Consistently outstanding.

Sweetgum (Liquidambar)

Quite variable but usually orange, red, and yellow.

Tulip Poplar (Liriodendron)

Yellow to golden yellow. Leaves may drop early in dry years.

Zelkova

Yellow, orange, red, and purple. May take some time to fully develop in the fall.

