

# THE PURDUE LANDSCAPE REPORT

## Alternatives to Burning Bush for Fall Color

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Burning bush is so named for its brilliant red foliage display in autumn. But we sometimes get questions asking why their shrub fails to color up, with leaves that remain green until they drop from the plant.

Fall color or lack thereof is affected by a number of factors, including genetics of the plant and environmental conditions such as temperature, soil moisture, nutrition, and sunlight. If a particular specimen fails to perform over multiple years it is likely that the plant lacks the genetic disposition for good fall color. This is not likely to improve over time.

Burning bush, also known as firebush, is considered an invasive plant in many states and is listed as a medium threat on the Indiana Invasive Species Council invasive plant list.

<https://www.entm.purdue.edu/iisc/invasiveplants.html>

This could be an opportunity to consider replacing burning bush with one or more of the following alternative shrubs with attractive fall color. Note that some cultivars are selected for fall color. You can take a “tour” of these plants and more at the Purdue Arboretum Explorer website,

<http://mlp.arboretum.purdue.edu/>.

Additional alternatives to invasive species in the landscape are discussed in Purdue Extension Bulletin ID-464

<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/ID/ID-464-W.pdf>



Chokeberry – *Aronia arbutifolia* ‘Brilliant’ fall color and fruit.



Fothergilla gardenii ‘Jane Platt’ fall color.



Oakleaf hydrangea – *Hydrangea quercifolia* fall color



Bottlebrush Buckeye – *Aesculus parviflora* fall color.



Sweetspire - *Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet'

Photos courtesy Purdue University Arboretum

**Common Name**

**Botanical Name**

Bottlebrush Buckeye

*Aesculus parviflora*

Chokeberry

*Aronia spp.*

Red- or yellow-twig dogwood

*Cornus spp.*

Leatherwood

*Dirca palustris*

Fothergilla

*Fothergilla spp.*

Witchhazel

*Hamamelis spp.*

Oakleaf Hydrangea

*Hydrangea quercifolia*

Spicebush

*Lindera benzoin*

Sweetspire

*Itea virginica*

Sumac

*Rhus spp.*

Viburnum

*Viburnum spp.*

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