



Larix laricina



Redbud

spring as it is partly evergreen but is damaged by snow. The flowers will rise and open, often when there is still snow and the new foliage appears as the flowers fade.

Spring is not just a celebration of green, there are yellows, too. Not the harsh, brassy yellows of the summer and fall, but the 'battered popcorn' type. One of my favourites is the newly opening buds of Cornus mas or Cornelian cherry. Highly recommended by Jim Lounsberry of Vineland Nursery on one of those long gone HGTV garden shows, this plant looks very unlike the other dogwoods. The stiff branches are covered with soft yellow flowers bursting forth.

In some ways it reminds me of Forsythia, that signal of spring yellow. I wonder if designers actually call that colour 'forsythia'? This spring shrub does absolutely nothing for me in the summer with its ungainly shape and plain green leaves. But, oh the glory, when it blooms in spring. It is a reminder of childhood and therefore will always have a spot in my garden.

The new growth on Larix laricina (Tamarack, Eastern larch) displays two wonderful spring shades— 'minty green' and 'rosy cheeks'.

Am I amusing you yet? Back on topic.

This deciduous conifer is one of a handful of evergreens that drop their foliage for the winter. This unusual trait gives us the wondrous arrival of the emerging foliage each spring adjacent to the female cones. This is a special tree in every season and as a native to Ontario can be readily grown here as long as the soil is not too dry. It becomes a very large tree so take care if you add one to your yard.

'Rosy cheeks' almost covers the colour of our native redbud but I am sure the designers would take exception and say "no, it is closer to 'prom-night pink'". Suffice it to say that the pink flowers coming straight out of the grayish brown bark is just plain weird.

The very first time that I saw the tree, Cercis canadensis, in flower it was a branch in a flower show and I thought the entry was a fake. Fake like the dried straw flowers that are glued on a cactus.

The redbud will stop you in your tracks with its simple beauty. My friend Jennifer from Milton lusted after the cultivar 'Forest Pansy' for years so I looked it up in Lost Horizon's catalogue (my favourite nursery in Acton).

Larry Davidson, owner, describes it thus: "One of the most exquisite small trees. The sun shining through the large, heart shaped, handsome, plum red leaves is nothing short of beguiling." Ha! He uses designer-speak, too!

Persicaria japonica 'Variegata', yes, a Japanese knotweed, is a whole other designer colour. This variegated form is not aggressive and grows nicely in a part shade location. The colour as it emerges in the spring, well, does 'baby's butt beige' ring a bell?



Persicaria japonica

Finally, I'll go back to green, the many shades of green from 'minty froth' to 'green with envy' found in the leaves of variegated Solomon's seal, Polygonatum multiflorum 'Variegatum'.

This woodlander takes a little time to establish, but is certainly worth the wait. The lovely arching stems gives it a graceful look and its other trick, it emerges a designer perfect 'princess pink'.



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