



## Givin' you the dirt

by Sean James  
The Compass

### A few of my favourite plants

We're coming up on the fall rains, which is a good time for planting. It seemed like the right time to share with you the plants I find most useful. I've chosen to narrow it down for you by presenting a favorite from several major plant groups in no particular order. I've also tried to choose the plants you won't find every day so you may have to do a bit of hunting and make special requests at garden centres - but they are available. Trust that it's worth the hunt.

What would make a plant especially useful to me? Looks obviously play the biggest role, although more is involved than flowers. Form, foliage and bark are key. I look for multi-seasonal interest and pest resistance. Ideally the plant will have a broad range of tolerance for shade and sun and moisture or the lack thereof.

For useful perennials, one of my best choices is Phlox carolina "Miss Lingard". She's a beauty! She doesn't suffer from powdery mildew like many summer phlox. She tolerates a fair bit of shade or full baking sun. She has pure white, fragrant flowers beginning in July. She's just over two feet tall. Best of all, if deadheaded back to the next set of leaves, she'll re-bloom well into the fall.

Beautybush, Kolkwitzia amabilis, is probably my favorite shrub. Covered in pink flowers in the spring with red seed heads in August, it makes a show for weeks on end. A burst of brilliant fall color makes the garden come alive. If left on its own, without pruning, it will develop a lovely winter form with long fountaining branches. It prefers sun and will handle terrible drought with quiet dignity and grace. Beware! It is a large shrub eventually reaching ten feet tall and ten across so give it some room.

With evergreens, try not to make the common mistake of putting a large shrub in a small place. The Golden Canadian Juniper, Juniperus communis "Depressa Aurea", will form a plant three feet tall and five feet across. Unlike most evergreens, this one changes with the seasons. New growth in the spring is bright yellow. As summer approaches it turns a rich gold. Winter brings a deep, almost rusted, burnished gold to the long (very sharp) needles. Different and lovely...and very graceful.

A very rare tree that has just become available on the market is the Golden Rain Tree, Koelreuteria paniculata. It blooms in August with large panicles of yellow flowers for weeks and weeks. It can have reddish fall colour. In the winter, it carries balloon-like seedpods that add interest. Full sun is necessary for good flowering. It is a comparatively small tree. The specimen at the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture is only 20 feet tall and as wide. It blooms very young and grows fairly fast. It showed no suffering during this summer's drought at my house. Don't confuse it with the Golden Chain Tree, Laburnum watererii, which is also a lovely tree.

Honourable mention goes to the Dawn Redwood, Metasequoia glyptostroboides. I don't have enough room to give it its due but it is a fast growing and very large deciduous conifer with lovely winter bark, apricot fall color and soft french green needles.

With bulb planting season on the way let me just recommend minor bulbs. Minor bulbs are the small bulbs like crocus that provide early colour and often multiply well giving a natural effect. They deserve a larger place in our landscapes. Some other examples are Scilla, Eranthus, Chionodoxa, species Tulips and Grape Hyacinth.

By the way, let's call this my favorite plants...today. I tend to change my mind a lot. There are just too many plants out there to choose just a few.



**Dr. Bug's**  
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by Robert Cameron



### You can't tame this shrew

If you have problems with tunneling in your lawn or garden, it may be a mole, a vole (meadow mouse) or it may be a shrew.

Shrews are amazing little animals that are not rodents but belong to the group insectivora as do moles. They are smaller than voles and moles, have short fur, clawed feet, a long pointed snout and very small eyes. They have good hearing. They are active year round and tend to be more active at night. They are good at tunneling but will sometimes use tunnels made by mice or moles.

Shrews are aggressive and ferocious animals and will attack snakes and other animals much larger than themselves. They are carnivores and feed on insects, worms, snails, slugs and other small animals including mice and other shrews.

Some species of shrews can inject a toxin, which will paralyze their prey. These animals must eat continuously and can consume more than the equivalent to their own body weight in 24 hours. Sometimes in the winter, when animal material is scarce, they will eat roots, nuts and seeds.

These animals are beneficial as they can consume large numbers of crop pest insects as well as snails and mice. Occasionally they may accidentally enter a home but will not live and breed within the house as do mice.

Rodenticides are not effective in controlling shrews since they are insectivores. Trapping with small mousetraps will sometimes work. Traps should be placed near exit holes or along runways and baited with meat. It is not advisable to pick up live shrews as their bite can cause pain that will last for several days.

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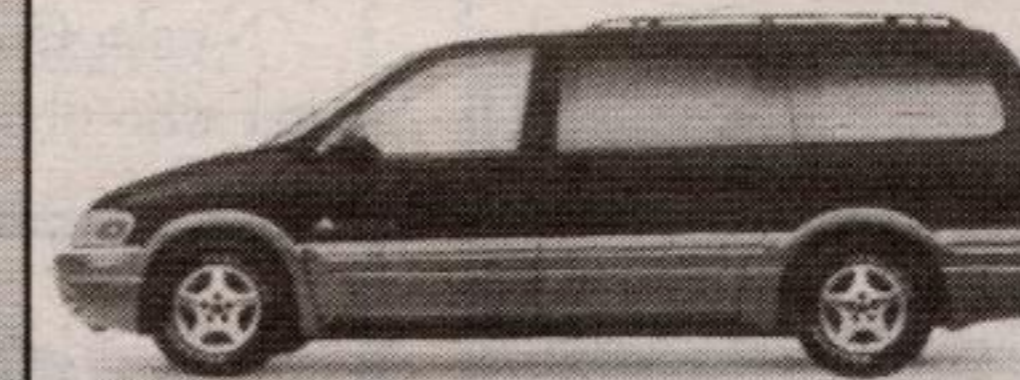
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