

HEATHERS WITH DIFFERENT COLOURED FOLIAGE ADD INTEREST TO YOUR GARDEN.

As you drive around at the moment you will notice bright splashes of reds and oranges in several gardens from the planting of heathers with foliage that changes colour in the winter. This is a great way to add interest to your garden.

There are really three ways through which we get colour from the foliage on heathers and heaths. The first is through planting heathers and heaths that have different coloured foliage throughout the year. The foliage colour can include mid green, dark green, grey green, yellow, silver grey, orange gold, bronze green and many shades in between. In many of the plants these colours stay the same throughout the year and provide you with the ability to create a palette of colour in your garden.

However, you can also plan changes in that palette through planting heathers and heaths that will change the colour of their foliage in the winter. The main genus that gives us winter foliage colour is *Calluna vulgaris* or what many of you will know as the summer flowering heather. These are great workhorse plants in the garden as they not only give us flowers in the summer but wonderful coloured foliage in the winter. As an example, *Calluna vulgaris* 'Firefly' has orange foliage in the summer but the foliage changes to a red in the winter giving a great splash of colour during that time of the year when we really need colour in our garden.

The third way of obtaining foliage colour from the heather and heaths is through planting those varieties that develop spring tips. The colours of these spring tips include orange, cream, red, yellow and pink and come from the new growth in the spring. Some examples are *Calluna vulgaris* 'Arina', which has orange tips in the spring, *Calluna vulgaris* 'Cream Steving' with its cream spring tips and *Calluna vulgaris* 'Flamingo' with its wonderful red spring tips. With these plants the timing of pruning is important to take advantage of the spring tips. If you have the varieties of *Calluna vulgaris* that have spring tips, prune them after they finish flowering but no later than the end of September. If you wait until the end of February, which is when one usually prunes the *Calluna vulgaris*, you will be pruning off the lovely spring tips.

So think about adding more colour to your garden through the use of a variety of heathers (*Calluna vulgaris*) and heaths (*Ericas and Daboecias*). These plants are relatively maintenance-free and deer-resistant, and will provide colour in the garden twelve months of the year.

The Vancouver Island Heather Society will be holding its 2009 spring sale on March 28th in the Farmer's Institute Hall in Cobble Hill. The doors will open at 9:30 am for demonstrations on pruning, planting and flower arranging using heathers and the sale will begin at 10am. Be there early to get the best selection. The sale will finish at noon or when sold out. There will be an excellent selection of winter blooming heaths, summer blooming heathers with winter coloured foliage or spring tips, summer blooming Irish heaths and tree heaths. Planter arrangements and an interesting selection of kits of 10 plants with planting diagrams will also be for sale. Members of the Society will be on hand to help you with your selections.

Elaine Scott, Vancouver Island Heather Society.