



2013 GreatPlants

The GreatPlants program is a joint effort of the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum that selects and promotes exceptional plants. Each year, a tree, conifer, shrub, perennial, and grass are chosen to be the 'pick of the year.' The 2013 selections have been made, and here they are. If you have the opportunity, add one or more of these to your home landscape!

Tree of the Year – Northern Pin Oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*)

You may (or may not) be familiar with the regular Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*). Although it's a great looking tree in the right situation, Pin Oaks are notorious for their intolerance of high pH soils, and iron chlorosis can be a serious issue. Fortunately, the Northern Pin Oak is much more suited for eastern Nebraska landscapes and our soils. Northern Pin Oaks will grow 50-60' tall. It has the attractive foliage a regular pin oak would have, with the deeply lobed leaves, and a strongly pyramidal habit. Acorns are small, only about ½" – ¾" in diameter.

Conifer of the Year – Border Pine (*Pinus strobiformis*)

Border Pines are a great alternative to its cousin, the common Eastern White Pine. Border pines still have that soft needle appearance that white pines have, but they are more likely to have a bluish cast to the needles. They can get very large – up to 80 feet under ideal conditions! So make sure you have the space for it before you plant it!

Shrub of the Year – American Cranberrybush Viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum* 'Red Wing')

Viburnums are so versatile!! There's one for every landscape situation – sunny, shady, wet, dry, you name it! The Cranberrybush viburnum is no exception. The cultivar chosen for this year's GreatPlants, 'Red Wing' is a great selection that offers truly four seasons of interest. The new leaves in the spring are red, with large, attractive white flowers. Flowers give way to shiny red fruit in the summer, and fall foliage turns a striking red in color. The fruit hangs on through the winter, providing food for birds, and continued interest. It can grow in full sun to part shade, and can reach sizes of 6-10' tall with about the same spread.

Perennial of the Year – Queen-of-the-Prairie (*Filipendula rubra*)

An under-utilized native wildflower! The flowers are lacy, pink clumps above foliage that looks similar to a maple leaf. The plant itself can grow 3-6 feet high, but needs slightly wet conditions to really grow that large. This would be a great choice for a spot in your yard that just doesn't seem to drain very well. It can reseed itself and become a stately mass of flowers, but again, would need extra moisture to really do so. This plant will also attract important pollinators, such as bees and butterflies, to your landscape.

Ornamental Grass of the Year – Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Blue Heaven')

Little bluestem grass is a grass native to the tallgrass prairies that at one point covered much of Nebraska. 'Blue Heaven' is a selection from the University of Minnesota for its more upright habit. The foliage is blue-grey, turning a striking burgundy in the fall. The seed heads appear in July-August and have a silvery appearance, making it an even more attractive grass. Little bluestems are smaller grasses, growing about 2-4.' It needs full sun, and will require little to no water after its first year. They are also very tolerant of different soil types – making it an excellent choice for eastern Nebraska landscapes!

Natalia Bjorklund is an Extension Educator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, serving Dodge County. If you have a question for her, you can visit the office here in Fremont at 1206 W. 23rd, or call /email at the following: 402.727.2775 or natalia.bjorklund@unl.edu