

Niagara College Greenhouse & Nursery Success Sheet No. 79

Shrubs to Add Texture

Texture

All plants have texture, but shrubs dominate the landscape because of their year-round appearance. Texture can be determined by a shrub's shape, size and colour.

These physical properties classify the shrub as coarse, medium or fine. Coarse is dominating while fine is delicate. By combining these textures effectively, you can create a sense of interest and some variety; you can even alter the apparent size of a yard.

When selecting a shrub, make sure the winter appearance is also considered. A plant that looks fine in leaf could have a dark, corky bark and a wild branching habit to make it look coarse.

Coarse

To determine whether a shrub is coarse, look at the plant's leaves, bark and habit. Leaves can be large, broad, dark, glossy, toothed or densely held. The bark can be rigid, corky or chunky, and the branching habit compacted, thick or tangled.

More than likely, a coarse shrub will have more than one of those characteristics. Coarse shrubs are useful in the landscape in creating a focal point or in making a yard look smaller. These shrubs should be used with discretion and only to add emphasis to the garden.

Some recommendations are *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora,' *Syringa vulgaris*, *Philadelphus coronaries* and *Buddleia davidii*.

Medium

Shrubs classified as being of medium texture have qualities from both coarse and fine. The

leaves may look delicate, but the branching underneath is wiry and tangled. Leaves are medium in colour, slightly toothed or loosely held on branches. Bark could be exfoliating or appear rigid close up.

Even though these shrubs are not as bold as coarse ones, they should still be used occasionally. Many of these shrubs could also be pruned into hedges because of the twiggy habit and little leaves.

Recommendations are *Deutzia gracillis*, *Hibiscus syriacus*, *Clethra alnifolia*, *Euonymus alata* 'Compacta' and *Cornus sericea* 'Flaviramea.'

Fine

Fine-textured shrubs appear delicate. Their leaves and branches blow in the wind while those of coarse shrubs remain still. Leaves are small, thin, sparse, smooth or light coloured. The branches are thin, flexible or weeping. Bark is usually smooth, papery or thin.

Overall appearance of the shrub is loose, open and feathery. These shrubs should be used more frequently in a landscape because of their ease on the eyes. They also make a small space seem larger, an advantage in urban yards.

Recommendations are *Kerria japonica*, *Potentilla fruticosa* 'Abbotswood,' *Spiraea bumalda* 'Goldflame' and *Salix purpurea* 'Nana.' Try planting these in a mass with a medium or coarse shrub in the middle to bring a little variety to your garden.

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