

Plant Research Report for:

Gretchen

Baltimore, Maryland USA

House faces east -- mid morning to mid afternoon sun, 6-8 hours in early summer

:: Size of shrubs maybe **3-4 feet max** -- I **don't want to shear them** regularly unless necessary due to being broken or some other problem -- shape of shrubs could be either **tall/skinny** or **short/round**, relatively speaking

:: Shapes of other plants -- **I like grassy things**, so have a lot of chives that I'm waiting to fill in more (and they are slowly), kind of **weeping mounds**, if that makes sense -- and then I like **taller spikey things sticking out** among the lower plants

:: I should say I'm also interested in **different colours of foliage** -- I know, in general, some things have nice fall foliage, some things are green through the winter, some things have no leaves in winter, but **nice bark colour** moving toward spring, etc. -- so I'm open to all of this sort of thing

* Full sun perennials that can tolerate partial shade

* red, yellow, orange, purple, maroon

* Smaller shrubs (what is the general height you're looking for? 1-6 feet? Any particular shapes? Are you going to want to shear them? Some are better for that than others)

* Interesting in fall and winter

Hi, Gretchen --

Here's what I've come up with:

lemon grass *Cymbopogon citratus*

This was the first thing that popped into my mind when you described what you wanted.

Lemon grass is a zone 9-10 plant but there are reports of it growing well down to zone 5 in full sun.

It's best to pot some to winter indoors just in case -- these are nice potted plants. Only use one stalk per pot as they grow very quickly and can burst a small pot.

You can often get lemongrass stalks at asian markets and root them in water -- don't bother buying seeds.



saffron crocus -- I bought mine online and love it. This comes up in October, with a brief lavender bloom with yellow and orange stamens. Collect the stamens and dry them to get saffron. Its bright green leaves are grassy, about 6-12 inches long, and stay green all winter.

They multiply like any other bulb does, and after a while you can separate them and grow your flock. These would look wonderful planted in clumps as an edible winter ground cover.



Rosa rugosa

This is the classic "rose hip" rose -- bright pink, red-purple, salmon, or white flowers in the spring (depending on variety) and orange-red hips in the winter. It's great for a full sun area that you can't get anything else to grow in because it tends to spread out and become invasive in more favorable areas.

Also good along walls, as a hedge, and on fences.



rhubarb



A frost tender perennial with interesting tall pale yellow, red and white flowers and huge leaves. Only the stems are edible, and are used in pies and other desserts. Rhubarb dies completely back in winter but comes right back once it warms up. Great for adding "wow" factor in the summer.

horseradish

Frost tender perennial related to mustards -- tall white flowers, interesting leaves, dies completely back in winter. You then dig and mash the roots to make horseradish paste.

Horseradish is a beneficial companion plant for fruit trees -- pests hate the smell/taste of it!



trifoliolate orange -- flexible twisty thorned branches stay green during winter, look very interesting, yellow-orange bitter fruits in fall, leaves turn yellow-orange in late fall and drop. I boil the fruits whole and make a lemon honey tea for winter colds. It's also good for making marmalade and sour lemonade.

This can get up to 6' tall and wide. Mine is about seven years old and is only 3 1/2' tall and two feet wide. It grows really slowly, has no pests that I can tell, and is unfazed by any kind of weather. As the plant matures, the thorns and branches become less flexible so watch out!



honeyberry *Lonicera caerulea* -- may get too big for you (3-8') but has bright red to brownish stems and red leaves in fall. The berries are inch-long cylinders with a color and taste similar to blueberries but don't need acidic soil. You could probably keep it trimmed to a reasonable size without too much trouble.

Lonicera caerulea kamtschatica 'Borealis' might be a good bet: what I've read said the mature size is 4x4'

These are 5 year old "Indigo Gem" bushes, another dwarf variety.



American highbush cranberry *Viburnum trilobum* 'Bailey Compact' -- dwarf version, 3-6' tall and wide, white flowers, burgundy foliage in fall, bright red berries persist into winter (birds don't like them). Not a true cranberry but tastes like one, and doesn't need acidic soil.



Saskatoon (or Juneberry) *Amelanchier alnifolia* "Regent" -- a compact shrub variety (4-6'), with yellow and red leaves in fall and white flowers. It tolerates drought well and the fruit is said to be very good.



Gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa*

Gooseberries like partial shade and get to about 3-5' tall at maximum. It tends to put out long branches which flop over to give a weeping mound look.

It has edible fruit which can be anywhere from light green to red, depending on the variety, and is translucent. It also has thorns.



Some other plants to consider

Cornus canadensis (Creeping dogwood, Bunchberry, Dwarf cornel) -- good semi-evergreen edible mounding ground cover for moist shady spots (near where your downspouts drain, for example), leaves turn purple in winter and sort of wilt down if it really gets cold (but you shouldn't have to worry about that in zone 7), 6-8" tall, spreads.

To plant, dig a trench deeper than what you would need, then place pieces of wood (logs are best, but any cut tree wood is fine, like ends of firewood -- not lumber) in the trench first, then put the plants on top and add soil to fill in for best results. The leaves have an interesting texture.



mint -- I've found that this doesn't get invasive in zone 7 -- lots of types and colors to choose from, does die back in winter

There are several with variegated leaves such as "pineapple mint" and "grapefruit mint" that I think you might like. I've heard that there is considerable differences in the taste of individual plants so I would try to taste a leaf before buying.

Alliums -- any of the alliums would be good for you, unfortunately they all

die back in the winter. The ornamentals drop bulblets that will self-seed pearl onions for you!

I think you would like *Allium moly* the best. *Allium moly* has bright yellow flowers and is hardy to zone 7. Like other alliums, the bulbs, leaves and flowers are all edible and reportedly taste like garlic.



thyme -- many colors to choose from, all are perennial and have reddish stems. "Golden Lemon" is a pretty one, with variegated yellow/green leaves.

daylilies -- you can find any color but blue. The size varies with variety (up to 3' tall) but has the weeping mounds shape you like. It dies back in the winter.

hostas (*H. longipes* is the best tasting) -- great for your shady spots as it loves shade. Many interesting leaf patterns. Dies back in winter.

hardy marjoram *Origanum X majoricum* -- I have this in my garden. It has been remarkably hardy, surviving Oklahoma weather on an exposed chain link fence for seven years now.

This is the first year it's died back and that after some brutal winds (two tornadoes) and hot/cold/hot/cold (as in 75 degrees then ice storm) that finally turned it black. Yellow-green leaves and flowers that remind me of tiny hops. I use it heavily in cooking.

Dwarf pomegranate "Nana" -- apparently comes in red and black ("black"

fruits are very dark burgundy), grows to 3-4', fruit reportedly not as good as in larger pomegranates.



All pomegranates can be pruned to about 4-5' tall without issues (I had a friend whose uncle had a pomegranate orchard in Iran, they would just chop the trees off at 5' tall every winter and they produce great). If fruit flavor is most important to you I would get a hardy regular sized variety (there are lots of them, most from Russia, that normally grow to 8-10 feet) and use an espalier technique along your wall there.

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/consumer/quickref/general/espalier.html>

lavender

Evergreen perennial in zone 7, grows naturally in a 2-3 ft spiky ball. Colors range from white to bluish purple. There are a zillion varieties of lavender out there, just pick the color you like best. Most have gray-green leaves, which might not go well with your color scheme.

I recommend *Lavandula angustifolia* hidcote purple -- variety of English lavender, semi-dwarf variety



prickly pear (opuntia) -- yellow, orange, or bright pink flowers, bright red fruit, green pads -- buy plant (not seeds). Lots of varieties and interesting shapes. They sort of "wilt" in winter (especially in dry winters or after ice storms) but pop back up when it warms up.

These need lots of sideways room (thorns!) so they might not be the best for your limited space except as a large pot (I'm thinking a stained oak half-barrel pot on your porch or on each side of the bottom of your stairs with one of the orange-pink varieties might look great)

<http://ediblelandscaping.com/products/cactus/Cactus/PricklyPearHardyCactus.php>



I hope this has been helpful to you. Please let me know what you end up choosing and how they work for you!

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