

New Plants At The Arboretum  
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The renovation of the landscape at the Administration Building and Special Collections Library provided an excellent opportunity to diversify our collections. Several new plants—a few being somewhat rare—were added to our collections.

A shrub considered to be one of the finest for fall color is *Disanthus cercidifolius*. As the species name implies, the foliage resembles the redbud in its heart-shaped outline. In the summer months the leaves have a bluish cast, and as cool fall temperatures arrive they turn an incredible burgundy red. A member of the Witch-hazel family, it is listed as Zone 5 in many references but needs protection from winter winds. One specimen is planted in the protected alcove of the new Special Collections Library, another in the outdoor patio area at the South Farm maintenance area.

Another rarity is the Chinese Sweetshrub, *Calycanthus chinensis*. An Asiatic cousin of the North American *Calycanthus* species, it also carries the common name of Chinese Wax Shrub. Described in 1963, this species is rare in the wild, found only on the wooded mountain slopes at 2000-3000 feet in Zhejiang Province in Eastern China. The first color photograph of the flower was taken only as recently as 1990 by the great plantsman Roy Lancaster. I grew it at Michigan State where it was planted three years ago and is still doing quite well. Flowers are produced on the current season's growth and are amazing to watch unfold. The large globular flower buds (somewhat like a peony) unfurl to reveal beautiful waxy tepals, which are white and flushed with pink, but do not carry the sweet smell of, nor closely resemble, the tepals of *Calycanthus floridus*. While the flowers do not resemble the North American sweetshrub, they produce a very similar bag-shaped fruit that carries surprisingly few seeds. The foliage is waxy or glossy in appearance, and the venation of the leaves—like many primitive plants—is very disorganized and non-uniform. Two specimens of the Chinese Wax Shrub are found in the protected area on the east side of the Special Collections Library.

Turning to tropical plants—yes, tropical plants at the Arboretum! C.B.M.T. Inc. Greenhouse in Hampshire, Illinois made a nice donation of assorted Taro plants for container use. Three different genera, *Colocasia*, *Alocasia*, and *Xanthosoma* are all large-leaved tropical foliage plants that make incredible container specimens. While they are obviously not part of our permanent collections, they are so cool I just have to tell you about them! We received different varieties of each of these. Some are planted at the entry to Thornhill, and some will soon be planted in containers at the entrances to the Administration and Research Center and the May Watts Reading Garden. Some really amazing Taros on display are:

*Colocasia esculenta* 'Black Magic'—This plant has huge heart-shaped leaves that are dark purple, almost black!

*Colocasia esculenta* 'Illustris'—Dark purple foliage, chartreuse yellow veins.

*Xanthosoma* 'Violet Stem'—Large egg plant purple leaves with deep violet stems.

These are just a few of the new plants we have obtained and planted this year. Make sure to get out and see them before we start talking about fall color and winter interest plants again!