Amsonia montana (Dwarf Blue Star)

This native perennials unique qualities of rapid spring emergence, blue flowers, compact vertical form and fall color make it a multi-season dazzler. Once Amsonia breaks dormancy, it shoots energetically upward forming a strong upright clump one to two feet tall. In late spring, sparkling sky-blue star-shaped flowers float atop the leaves. “It makes a fabulous cut flower,” says extension specialist, Sue Barton. In the fall, the foliage is a glowing golden yellow. Plant in moist soils and partial shade to full sun. Amsonia has no serious pests. It is a lovely bridging plant between spring and summer, with a grand fall finale.

Photo by Paul Dennison

Fothergilla gardenii (Dwarf Fothergilla)

Fothergilla is an excellent native American deciduous shrub. It grows to a height of 3 to 4 feet and maintains an attractive compact habit. White, fragrant flowers are borne in 1 to 2 inch spikes from April to to early May. The textured oval leaves turn brilliant shades of wine, orange, and yellow to provide a rich fall display. It may even have multiple colors on one leaf. Fothergilla grows best in part shade, but for an intense fall display, full sun and moist soils are a necessity. Fothergilla has no serious pests. This small shrub combines well with heather, azaleas, and rhododendrons. Include Fothergilla in your garden for it’s interesting flowers, good summer foliage and outstanding fall color.

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