

“Pyracantha”

by Sally Cureton

Over a year ago, we planted a small **pyracantha** bush in front of the cabin at the Rockingham Springs Arboretum in hopes of providing some color to the front of that rustic building. If you have a place in your landscape for this plant, it will surely reward you with beautiful orange to red berries each fall. They appear in thick clusters and will last until late winter. Pyracantha is an evergreen that grows 10-15 feet high and will spread to 10 feet. It grows fairly quickly, sometimes more than two feet a year, depending on soil conditions. It resents being transplanted, so once you find a place for it, it is best to leave it alone.

Pyracantha can be pruned during any season, but winter or early spring are recommended. Flowers and berries are produced only on growth that is at least one year old. The flowers are in clusters and are small, white and hawthorn-like, popular with nectar-loving insects. This is a valuable wildlife plant, whose berries provide long-lasting fruits for various resident songbirds or for other birds that travel through. In addition, the plant itself, with its fierce thorns, provides shelter for these birds, including robins, eastern bluebirds, northern cardinals and northern mockingbirds. Something to consider planting when you are want to add some color in your yard and help out our feathered friends at the same time.