



## Adam's notes from the garden...

In this short span of two weeks that since I started working here, it has been amazing to see how much this dynamic garden has transitioned. Despite the cool days, with a few freezing nights, visually the garden has amazingly shifted from autumn colors to winter interest during these few January weeks. Initially the maples were showing wonderful red, orange and yellow autumn color, especially the Mexican sugar maples (*Acer skutchii*) Taiwanese maple (*Acer oliverianum* var. *formosanum*), the Chinese *Acer discolor*, and a Mexican collection of Bigtooth Maple *Acer grandidentatum*. Though several evergreen species of *Lindera*, in the laurel family, always look great in the woodland garden, two species, *Lindera angustifolia* and *Lindera glauca*, are deciduous, but instead of dropping the dead leaves, they are fully retained on the tree into spring, when the new flush of growth finally pushes them off. Though retained dead leaves may sound unattractive, the crisp light coppery-tan foliage combined with the tree's spreading architecture and smooth bark, is quite beautiful, especially when effectively integrated with the right mix of colors and textures among neighboring plants and utilizing the shifting light to emphasize the coloration as John has effectively done. When I arrived, Flowering cherries (*Prunus mume*) were at their peak, and though the flowers are fading their dropped petals now create carpets of color on the ground below. Replacing the cherries are the reds, pinks, whites and purples of Camellias and deciduous Magnolias, with much-needed yellow colors amply supplied by the many wonderful Mexican, Asian and hybrid Mahonias. Some of the early-rising Trilliums have their beautifully mottled foliage unfurled and are already up and in bud, while other species are just poking through the mulch along with Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). Holly fruits add to the show, not just the usual red, but also yellow fruited forms of Yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria* 'Saratoga Gold') and Winterberry (*Ilex decidua* 'Finch's Gold'). Two small species of hardy understory palms *Chamaedorea radicalis* and *C. microspadix* also bear striking fruit,

transitioning from green to yellow to orange to red. At ground level, the many cultivars of Japanese Sacred Lily (*Rohdea japonica*) also hold tight clusters of large red fruits, as does the groundcover Japanese coral berry *Ardisia japonica*. Properly planned, a garden in winter should be ablaze with color.

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## Spring Calendar

- *Friday [February 19](#) Docent Training (part 1 of 2)*
  - *Saturday [February 27](#) Docent Training (Part 2 of 2)*
  - **Saturday [March 12](#) (Opening Day) Peckerwood Garden Open day**
  - *Saturday [March 19](#) Monthly Docent focused training*
  - **Saturday [March 26](#) (day before Easter) Peckerwood Garden Open day**
  - **Saturday [April 9](#) Peckerwood Garden Open day**
  - *Friday [April 15](#) Monthly Docent focused training*
  - **Saturday [April 23](#) Peckerwood Garden Open day**
  - *Saturday [April 30](#) Houston Garden Conservancy Garden Tours & Peckerwood Garden Plant Sale (located in Houston)*
  - **Sunday [May 8](#) (Mother's day) Peckerwood Garden Open day**
  - *Saturday [May 14](#) Monthly Docent focused training*
  - **Saturday [May 21](#) Friends of Peckerwood Day**
  - *Friday [June 17](#) Monthly Docent focused training*
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One of the many exceptional Taiwanese oaks Peckerwood received seed of for trial is *Quercus pachyloma*, with a most unusual ruffled cupule (acorn cap). From Adam's observations in Taiwan, it also has beautiful fuzzy purple new flushes of leaves.

## Around the nursery

Peckerwood has always offered exciting plants during its open days, but we have plans to expand our offerings to include even more interesting and underutilized plants that have been begging to be propagated. Gardeners Adolfo Silva, Angela McCann, and Ricardo Bautista recently worked on refurbishing one of the greenhouses on site to develop into a propagation greenhouse. We have already been collecting seeds of many valuable plants in the garden, and we have received donations of many interesting seeds that will be incorporated into Peckerwood Garden's collections and eventually shared after trialing for adaptability here. Already germinating are some obscure Taiwanese oaks sent by a friend there, many with quite noteworthy features to help in our mission to encourage diverse and exciting landscapes.



Please join us as a member of the [Friends of Peckerwood](#). Members receive free admission on Open Days, notices of special events, discounts on plant purchases at the garden and at participating nurseries

[What information or updates do you want to see in our newsletters? Let us know!](#)

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## Plant of the month



On the subject of winter interest, one unusual conifer demands attention this time of year. During warmer months, the upright Japanese plum yew selection *Cephalotaxus harringtoniana* 'Korean Gold' leaves observers wondering why a dark green plant has such a name. Only after a few late fall cold snaps will the show really start, when the outer foliage is gilded with bright yellow highlights and contrasts sharply with the dark green inner needles. This winter coloration is produced through an interesting process called "photoinhibition". During winter when the plants are dormant and physiological functions are slowed down, they undergo a temporary change that allows them to deal with excessive sunlight that would normally be utilized for photosynthesis during the warmer months of the year. This change of color is not to be confused with fall color on deciduous trees, as these colored needles will not fall off. On the subject of winter interest, one unusual conifer demands attention this time of year. During warmer months, the upright Japanese plum yew selection *Cephalotaxus harringtoniana* 'Korean Gold' leaves observers wondering why a dark green plant has such a name. Only after a few late fall cold snaps will the show really start, when the outer foliage is gilded with bright yellow highlights and contrasts sharply with the dark green inner needles. This winter coloration is produced through an interesting process called "photoinhibition". During winter when the plants are dormant and physiological functions are slowed down, they undergo a temporary change that allows them to deal with excessive sunlight that would



normally be utilized for photosynthesis during the warmer months of the year. This change of color is not to be confused with fall color on deciduous trees, as these colored needles will not fall off.

Many conifers will show photoinhibition to a slight degree if conditions are consistently cold, appearing in winter



as light green to slightly golden, or in some specie bronze, brown or reddish purple. Even loblolly pines will have a slight, barely noticeable light green to gold hue after some cold weather. However, certain rare individuals will display photoinhibition to an excessive degree, visually appearing a bright shocking gold, and these notable examples become popular winter garden subjects. There are several cultivars of pines, hemlocks, firs and spruces that are as yellow as a school bus in winter, then revert back to normal green in summer.

Unfortunately there are few of these selections that are adaptable to southeast Texas, or they will thrive but simply don't receive enough chilling to attain the coloration in USDA zones 8-9. *Cephalotaxus harringtoniana* 'Korean Gold' is one of the few that will develop color in winter in this area, most prominently in the inland sections away from the warming influence of the gulf. Though plum yews are most often utilized in shady garden settings, most will also happily take nearly full sun but might require a little more irrigation. In order for 'Korean Gold' to attain the best winter color it will require this sort of open exposed conditions. In sheltered areas it will remain plain green, no different than the regular form of upright (fastigiata) *C. harringtoniana*.



Docent training classes are Feb 19 and 27, and are led by our Director of Horticulture, Adam Black. [More details and how to sign up.](#)

[Sign up Now](#)



From welcoming visitors, to leading tours, to working in the garden or in our office, there are many ways to lend your talents! Let us know how you would like to [get involved](#). Sign up to assist at an event [here](#).