



Welcome to **The Potting Bench**, a new monthly feature in which we'll be examining landscaping choices featuring native and adaptive plant options for hardiness, structure, privacy, maintenance, and color. Here are some of the popular choices we'll show off in upcoming issues of TMN:

### 1. The Workhorse Shrubs (Hedges & Privacy)

- **Korean Spice Viburnum** (*Viburnum carlesii*): A hydrangea *dead ringer*, but a less thirsty, wonderfully fragrant, compact blooming, *fruit-bearing* standalone or shrub. **Follows on the next page, the first 'Potting Bench' feature!**
- **Sweet Viburnum** (*Viburnum odoratissimum*): A very popular fast-growing screen with large, glossy green leaves and highly fragrant spring blossoms.
- **Cleyera** (*Ternstroemia gymnanthera*): Prized for its striking, bronze-red new growth that matures into a deep, glossy green. It has an upright habit and is highly disease-resistant.

### 2. Colorful Flowering Shrubs

- **Camellia** (*Camellia japonica/sasanqua*): A true Southern staple. They thrive in North Florida's filtered shade and bloom late autumn through winter when most other landscape plants are dormant.
- **Azaleas** (*Rhododendron*): Known for exploding with vibrant, colorful blooms every spring. They prefer slightly acidic, well-drained soil and dappled shade.
- **Loropetalum** (*Loropetalum chinense*): Also known as Chinese Fringe Flower, this shrub offers rich, burgundy-purple foliage all year and wispy pink flowers.
- **Oakleaf Hydrangea** (*Hydrangea quercifolia*): Native to the Southeast, these shrubs provide four-season interest with massive white summer blooms

that age to pink, and deeply lobed, oak-like leaves that turn bronze in fall.

### 3. Florida Native Wildlife Attractors (and some *great* common names!)

- **American Beautyberry** (*Callicarpa americana*): An easy-to-grow deciduous shrub famous for producing stunning, dense clusters of bright purple berries along its stems in the autumn.
- **Firebush** (*Hamelia patens*): A fast-growing tropical-looking shrub that produces fiery red-orange tubular flowers from spring through first frost. It is exceptionally drought-tolerant and a magnet for hummingbirds and butterflies.
- **Wax Myrtle** (*Myrica cerifera*): A highly adaptable, fast-growing native shrub that thrives in sandy Florida soil. It produces fragrant leaves and small blue-gray berries utilized by local birds.

### 4. Fragrant Accents

- **Gardenia** (*Gardenia jasminoides*): Iconic evergreen shrubs adored for their intense, sweet fragrance and creamy white double blossoms. They prefer acidic soil and full sun to part shade.
- **Star/Confederate Jasmine** (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*): Often used as a sprawling shrub, groundcover, or climbing vine. It provides deep green foliage and blankets the landscape in small, intensely scented white flowers during the spring and summer. For a deeper dive into regional planting guides, specific soil pH requirements, or cold-hardiness by your exact zip code in the Green Cove Springs area, consult the UF/IFAS Gardening Solutions database.

Beginning with this issue, we will report on one of these landscaping options, the **Korean Spice Viburnum**, which follows on the next pages.

- STORY, PHOTOS: EDITOR

