



Selling Summer Blooms

Extend your selling season with summer flowering trees.

By Nancy Buley

Selling the beauty of flowering trees is a time-honored spring tradition. Most garden centers do a great job of gearing up for sales of ornamental plums, cherries, pears, redbuds, magnolias, crabapples and Florida dogwoods. It's later in the season, when the blooms of a vast array of annuals, perennials and shrubs vie for attention, that trees tend to be relegated to the back lot. Unfortunately, sales of these essential garden elements tend to trail off in direct proportion to their visibility and accessibility.

Harnessing the sales appeal of flowering trees needn't end with April showers. Flowers make the cash registers ring, and savvy garden center employees can extend the season for selling spring's sizzle by choosing trees that reserve their bloom for the long days of summer. Offering a tantalizing array of summer bloomers right on through August will assure the continual flow of trees out your door.

Trees suggested in this article have merit beyond their summer blooms. Brilliant fall color, strongly textured foliage, autumn fruits, interesting bark and other seasonal features will continue to tempt buyers long after the last bloom has faded.

Going To The Dogs

Chinese dogwoods (*Cornus kousa*). These dogwoods take center stage in the bloom parade in late spring just as the magnolias, ornamental cherries, crabapples and Florida dogwoods take their

Dogwood 'Heart Throb' has bold rose-pink blooms that are formed by sturdy bracts and reach up to 4 inches in diameter. (Photos: J. Frank Schmidt & Son Co.)



Left: Dogwood 'Samaritan'. **Middle:** Named for large, white flower clusters that appear during its namesake month, 'June Snow' has flat-topped clusters of tiny, white, star-like flowers that float above the dark-green, strongly textured leaves. **Right:** The winter interest created by its remarkable bark puts 'China Snow' in the same league as paperbark maple and birchbark cherry.

final bows. Late spring blooms, handsome summer foliage, great fall color, striking winter character and disease resistance will endear these trees to your customers. There are many fine cultivars from which to choose, including two new selections that offer extended bloom time and one with variegated foliage.

Dogwood 'Heart Throb' (Cornus kousa 'Schmred'). It demands love at first sight. Bold rose-pink blooms are formed by sturdy bracts and reach up to 4 inches in diameter. Flowers bloom in bright contrast to the attractive dark-green foliage for up to two months in the temperate Pacific Northwest climate where it was introduced. Deep-red fall color and striking red fruits of about three-fourths-inch diameter provide seasonal interest.

Dogwood 'Prophet' (Cornus kousa 'Propzam'). This tree's flowers are creamy white and profuse in late spring. It continues to bloom sporadically through the summer months. Red fruits pepper the dark-green foliage, which turns burgundy red in autumn.

Dogwood 'Samaritan' (Cornus kousa 'Samzam'). It bears prolific white blooms in May and June. The color parade continues through the summer season with variegated green foliage rimmed with creamy white, slightly ruffled margins. This handsome tree cranks up the color in autumn when the variegated leaves turn to rich pink and burgundy and strawberry-like red fruits appear.

See Summer Snow

June brings snow flurries of the fragrant variety to the garden. Building a tree sales promotion around a theme of "snow in summer" with summer-flowering trees is sure to capture the attention of your garden center clientele.

Dogwood 'June Snow' (Cornus controversa). This dogwood brings snow to summer and brilliant fall color to autumn. Named for large, white flower clusters that appear during its namesake month, its flat-topped clusters of tiny, white, star-like flowers float above the dark-green, strongly textured leaves, often exceeding 6 inches in diameter. Abundant clusters of tiny blue-black fruits create seasonal interest for the very brief period between their ripening and being devoured by birds.

Mottled fall colors are a medley of brilliant orange yellow, salmon, red, purple and purple red. As 'June Snow' matures to a height of about 30 ft., it becomes wider than tall. Branches spread to 40 ft. as they become distinctively horizontally tiered, a characteristic that is especially appreciated in winter. Hardiness is USDA Zone 5.

Japanese Snowbell 'Snowcone' (Styrax japonicus 'JFS-D'). It features the same pure-white, bell-shaped, pendulous flowers as the species but is unique for its densely uniform and pyramidal shape. Heavy flowering at an early age and leaves that are smaller and more refined than those of the species are also advantages. Nor does it appear

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to suffer the winter tip dieback problem that typically occurs in the species. Very narrow and upright in form compared to the species, its mature height is about 25 ft. with a spread of about 20 ft.

Snowbell 'Snow Charm' (*Styrax japonicus* 'JFS-E'). This tree

grows into a predictably uniform, rounded shape, which is a feature that will be appreciated by landscape designers. Unlike trees grown from seedlings of this highly variable to species, it can be counted on to develop a rounded canopy of about 20 ft. in height and

spread. Like 'Snowcone', it resists twig dieback but has larger dark-green leaves and a broader, more traditional form. Pure-white, bell-shaped flowers appear in late spring, and fall foliage is yellow. Both selections are hardy through USDA Zone 5.



Tree lilac 'China Snow' (*Syringa pekinensis* 'Morton').

It sparkles in June with large sprays of creamy-white flower clusters. Dark-green, glossy foliage is borne on upright, spreading branches of this small tree that grows to a height of approximately 25 ft. with a spread of about 20 ft. Yellow autumn leaves fall to reveal curly tresses of amber to orange-brown bark, the best feature of this tough-performing tree.

The winter interest created by its remarkable bark puts 'China Snow' in the same league as paperbark maple and birchbark cherry. To promote the seasonal wonder of gardens and to spark winter tree sales, try combining it

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liant autumn leaves through the fall and add texture to the winter garden. This unusual small tree grows to a height of about 25 ft. and spread of about 15 ft. It is rated hardy to USDA Zone 5.

Japanese stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*). These blossoms are gems among the leaves of summer. The camellia-like blossoms are white with bright-orange centers. These create a surprising contrast

against the dark-green leaves of July and August. Fall color ranges from an excellent dark purplish red to bright orange red. As the tree matures, exfoliating bark reveals beautiful cream, tan and brown

Opposite, top and middle: Snowbell 'Snow Charm' grows into a predictably uniform, rounded shape and has pure-white, bell-shaped flowers that appear in late spring. **Opposite, bottom:** Tree lilac 'China Snow'. **Top:** Tall stewartia is an unusual cousin of the better-known *Japanese stewartia*. **Bottom:** Tall stewartia really shines in autumn when its refined leaves turn to shades of maroon and red.

in a retail landscape display with hellebores and early blooming bulbs. This introduction of Chicagoland Grows has a USDA Zone 5 hardiness rating.

Summer Blooms/ Autumn Color

Summer flowers and exceptional fall color are traits rarely combined in the world of trees. If the following four trees remain in your garden center after their blooms have faded, create a display to showcase their marvelous autumn leaves.

Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*). Sourwood is fondly called "lily of the valley tree" thanks to branches that are smothered in mid summer with long clusters of fragrant, creamy-white, bell-shaped flowers. Dark-green leaves give way to an outstanding display of red, orange, yellow and purple in the fall.

Golden-brown flower stalks are attractive long after the white blooms are gone. Their lacy clusters are suspended above the bril-

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patches on the trunk and larger branches. In winter, the sensuous bark is appreciated for its rich color and smooth texture. Hardy through Zone 6, its mature shape is pyramidal to oval, reaching a height of about 40 ft. and spread of 20 ft.

Tall stewartia (*Stewartia monadelpha*). This is an unusual cousin of the better-known Japanese stewartia. Its abundant crop of white blooms that appear in early summer are smaller and more subtle but every bit as enchanting as the

more widely planted species *S. pseudocamellia*. Smaller in stature and more heat tolerant, it thrives in Zones 6-8 and is recommended for planting in southern climates. Tall stewartia really shines in autumn when its refined leaves turn to



Franklinia (*Franklinia alatamaha*) is beloved for its beautiful flowers that mark the passage of summer into fall.

shades of maroon and red. Exfoliating cinnamon-brown bark spices up the winter garden with rich color and smooth texture that begs to be touched.

Franklinia (*Franklinia alatamaha*). Franklinia is beloved for its beautiful flowers that mark the passage of summer into fall. From August to October, a season when the flowering of trees is rare, franklinia sports peony-like, single, white flowers with brightly contrasting yellow centers. Upright and spreading in character, this namesake of Benjamin Franklin has handsome reddish-brown bark. Its dark-green leaves contrast with the white flowers, which sometimes bloom in concert with the leaves turning orange to red in the fall. A small tree rated hardy through USDA Zone 5, it eventually grows to a height of about 25 ft. with a spread of 10-15 ft. 🌳

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