

Keep it Dark

Paul Green of Green's Leaves let us into some of his darkest (plant) secrets

The popularity of dark plants looks set to continue. Just like variegated plants, dark plants are best shown off when not put all together. Mix them up with a whole range of colours to give strong contrasts.

Here are a few of the increasing range we grow which are selling well - they are hardy and reliable.

Weigela florida Wine & Roses ('Alexandra') – the best of many dark forms in my book. The foliage needs good light (full sun is perfect) to colour up. The bonus of masses of rich pink trumpet flowers in summer make this a winner. At only 3-4 ft (just over 1 m) they fit most gardens.

Physocarpus opulifolius Lady in Red ('Tuilad') – the new intensely red foliage is stunning, turning a deep purple with age. Flowers are pink tinged in bud, opening white. As well as use in borders or big tubs, this makes a good hedge when pruned.



Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens' – "Black Mondo Grass" – hell of a big name for a fairly small plant. There are newer more vigorous forms of this - Black Beard is a strong one. There's nothing wrong with the original form though. They all like the good life (like me) – plenty of food & drink! Great for pots or borders, this can be used in sun or a bit of shade too. You need a good contrast to show the black off – maybe a silver leaved *Brunnera* or golden grass such as *Hakonechloa*. Or even ... wait for it, it's very Chelsea – a coloured glass mulch?

I'm bulking up a white edged, black ophiopogon – it's very slow, but lovely.

Sambucus nigra Black Tower – a slow growing, fastigate dark elder. For those who find Black Beauty a bit strong (!), go for this. It's especially suited to growing in containers. Attractive flowers & elderberries are a bonus.

Hydrangea macrophylla 'Merveille Sanguine' – marvellous blood indeed! See photo. Our best selling macrophylla type by a mile – flowers are especially dark on acid soils (or in a pot with ericaceous compost).



Dark plants are not miserable – they give you a bit of drama in your garden!

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