

# Shocking the Senses

## Wake Up Your Garden with the Unexpected

By Dave Dunn

### Rideau Woodland Ramble

Gardens tend to be calming, traditional places where you have an expectation of certain kinds of plants, groupings, borders and edges.

This can lead to overly safe planning, and missed opportunity during development of a garden design. This story is all about putting safety aside, and bringing the garden to life with surprises meant to ***Shock the Senses***. You can inject this shocking beauty into your garden through the use of many devices, but I am going to touch on surprise colour contrasts, weird forms, unexpected scale, and fantastic art.



"Argentia" Variegated Pagoda Dogwood

## The Power of Colour

Visualize a sea of lime green ferns, with their cut leaf form and knee high scale. Now, drop in a bright red - "Red-Select" Japanese Maple. This weeping form of cut leaf maple echoes the leaf shape, but blasts intense colour into this sea of tranquil ferns....definitely an image to notice and remember. Drop a variegated Pagoda Dogwood into a dark green woodland, and all of a sudden the light bulb is turned on. This bright inclusion of white provides relief from the shade, and also a highlight on the tour of the garden. Think blue....contrasted with other colours in the garden. In this instance, a Columnar Blue Spruce announces the way into the garden at a trail. The surprise form and colour in this case adds to the interest and surprise one feels while rambling around.



Red Select Japanese maple

## Weird Shapes

How about adding a weeping combination green and blue spruce at the junction of two trails? You can be sure such a rare sight will spark interest, and a memorable event in the garden. Weeping forms are always a nice counterpoint to the usual upright growth habit of plant material, trees and shrubs. Weeping White Pine, Larch and other all have the power to impress.



Weeping green and blue Spruce

## Large or Small

You can liven up the garden experience through the use of scale. The range of plant size is amazing, from the tiny, such as Hosta Tiny Tears, or Blue Mouse Ears, to the giants like Hosta Sum and Substance, or Blue Umbrellas, or even the shocking scale of some great grasses. Play with scale to shake up your garden visitors.

Giant Grass



## Amazing Art

It goes without saying that the introduction of art can be the crowning touch in your garden. You can always place art to inspire, and be the centre of attention, or you can place it in unexpected areas, for surprise or humor. Art can be a found object, repurposed for your use, or an amazing sculpture demanding a home in your garden. Its power is sometimes doubled, if you come upon it by surprise. It has true power.



Fat Frogs

So, go out and shock the senses, and wake up your garden with a series of unexpected moves that only you know about.... And then sit back and watch the expressions of your visitors. Your garden will never be the same!

The gardens of **Rideau Woodland Ramble** are open 7 days a week, 9am-5pm, free of charge. Come Ramble