

Preferred Evergreen Shrubs  
Village of Irvington, NY

The Irvington Tree Commission recommends the shrubs listed below as being good choices for homeowners' landscapes. Several of these shrubs are native, and some provide a very broad habitat for wildlife. We've chosen shrubs that we know are available in the Nursery trade and that are relatively disease-resistant. This is by no means a comprehensive listing, but we hope will serve as a starting point for you when thinking about what to plant. We encourage you to do further research about whatever type of plant you choose to learn its characteristics in more detail.

**EVERGREEN SHRUBS:** Evergreen shrubs fall into 2 categories: "broadleaf" evergreens (glossy green smooth leaves) and "needled" evergreens (the leaves are needles, as the name implies). These shrubs do not lose their leaves in the fall, meaning that they can block unwanted views and/or add privacy and winter interest to the landscape. Since they are shrubs, their mature sizes are smaller than trees, usually well under 10' tall. They are prized for their foliage, spring flowers, or berries. In some cases, we've listed specific species or cultivars that we feel are the best choices.

\* Indicates native plant

Common Name	Botanical Name	Mature Size	Special Characteristics
Azalea	<i>Rhododendron ssp.</i>	3-5'	Small glossy green leaves with ½ - 2" flowers in May; flowers last for only a couple of weeks; prefers part shade; slow-to-moderate growth rate; protect from wind and direct sunlight in winter; will not tolerate wet feet. The habit of azaleas in nature is open and irregular – they are not meant to be shaped or sheared except in special situations (as in Japanese gardens). There are many named varieties, usually incorporating the name of the hybridizer. Some of the more well-known cultivars include: 'Hino Crimson', 'Blauw's Pink', 'Stewartsonian', 'Mother's Day', 'Delaware Valley White', 'Michael Hill', 'Girard's Pleasant White' and many more. 'Conversation Piece' is a compact cultivar that doesn't grow taller than 2', so it can be used in the front of the border, and flowers later than some of the larger azaleas.
Blue Holly	<i>Ilex X meserve var.</i>	8-12'	Hybrids of Prostrate holly ( <i>I. rugosa</i> ) and English holly ( <i>I. aquifolium</i> ), these broadleaf evergreens have shiny, spiny leaves and tolerate sun or part shade and most types of soil. Female varieties set red berries that persist in winter, but both male and female plants are needed for fruit set. Blue hollies are so common in our area, though, that there is often a male within the required range in someone else's yard. Blue hollies can be shaped successfully, and are often maintained in pyramidal forms. Recommended cultivars: 'Blue Maid', 'Blue Princess' (slower growing), 'Blue Prince' (male pollinator).
Boxwood	<i>Buxus koreana X. B. sempervirens hybrids</i>	3-5'	Boxwood is an extremely versatile broadleaf evergreen, tolerating full shade or full sun and just about any soil condition. Boxwood is the ideal hedging plant, very tolerant of frequent shearing and shaping. The best varieties are hybrids of Littleleaf (Korean) boxwood and American boxwood, which keep their green color in winter instead of turning a bronzy color – including 'Green Gem', 'Green Mountain' and 'Green Velvet'.

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Cherry Laurel	<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	3-6'	A broadleaf evergreen with glossy dark green leaves and an upright vase-shaped growth habit; white flowers in early spring are not particularly showy; its variable open habit makes it unsuitable for shearing or shaping, but adds an element of motion and interest. Prefers shade. Recommended cultivars: 'Otto Luyken' is a compact form that grows about 3' tall and 6' wide; 'Schipkanensis' (or "Skip Laurel") is a more upright and taller form, more commonly used for screening. Note that Skip laurel is variably hardy in our region, and in some winters most of the Skip laurels have died back significantly. They are also very susceptible to winterburn. 'Otto Luyken' is winter-hardy in our area, but also doesn't do so well when exposed to full sun and northern winds in winter.
Creeping Juniper (Groundcover types and Spreading types)	<i>Juniperus spp.</i>	1-5'	These needled evergreens require full sun and can be divided into groundcover and spreading types. They do not tolerate wet feet, and are often used for steep banks or around buildings or stones where little else will grow. Groundcover types are low-growers with wide-spreading habits and include <i>J. horizontalis</i> cultivars 'Bar Harbor', 'Blue Chip' and 'Wiltoni' (Blue Rug juniper), <i>J. procumbens</i> 'Nana' (Japanese Garden juniper) and <i>J. squamata</i> 'Blue Star'. Spreading types are taller than groundcover types, with branches growing upwards and outwards, and include <i>J. chinensis</i> cultivars 'Hetzii', 'Pfitzeriana' (Pfitzer's juniper), <i>sargentii</i> (Sargent's juniper) and 'Seagreen'.
*Inkberry Holly	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	4-6'	Lustrous dark green small leaves; can tolerate shade and moist soil; can be shaped and used for hedging (but coarser than shaped and sheared boxwood). The best cultivars don't become leggy, including 'Compacta' and 'Densa'.
Japanese Andromeda	<i>Pieris japonica</i>	3-5'	Broadleaf evergreen with an irregular "haystack" shape; can't be shaped or sheared successfully; Lily-of-the-Valley-like flowers in Apr – May; new growth emerges bronze/red above the spent flowers; sun or shade, but may need to be protected from direct winter sun and wind. Recommended cultivars: 'Dorothy Wycoff', 'Mountain Fire' & 'White Cascade'. X'Brouwer's Beauty' is a hybrid of Japanese andromeda and Mountain andromeda ( <i>P. floribunda</i> ).
Japanese Holly	<i>Ilex crenata</i>	3-5'	Very commonly used for landscaping in our area, with a wide selection of cultivars that can be used as foundation plants or hedges. Foliage very similar to <i>I. glabra</i> – often hard to tell apart, esp. since some cultivars have the same names! Can tolerate shade; more subject to winterburn than <i>I. glabra</i> – benefits from a good winter mulch of its root zone. Recommended cultivars: 'Compacta', 'Helleri' (a compact grower not exceeding 3'), 'Hetzii', 'Schwoebel's Upright', 'Steeds', 'Nigra', 'Chesapeake'.

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*Mountain Laurel hybrids	<i>Kalmia latifolia</i> var.	3-5'	Vigorous, slow-growing native broadleaf evergreen with large clusters of small flowers appearing over a two-week period in mid-June. It prefers some shade (native to the understory) but can tolerate sun and doesn't mind moist soil. The hybrids are more compact growers than the species, and can even tolerate some shaping. Recommended cultivars: 'Olympic Fire', 'Raspberry Glow', 'Sarah' (but any of the hybrids are nice!). There are also dwarf hybrids that grow to only 2-3' tall, and are useful for foundation plantings – 'Elf', 'Little Linda' and 'Minuet'.
*Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron</i> ssp.	Large-leaf 4-8'; Small-leaf 2-5'	Rhodies are broadleaf evergreens that can generally be divided into large-leaf and small-leaf forms. The large-leaf forms have 3-10" flower heads in May-June (after azaleas), and prefer partial shade. There are many cultivars, with some of the most well-known ones being cultivars of the native <i>R. catawbiense</i> ('Roseum Elegans', 'Nova Zembla', 'Cunningham's White', 'Boursault', 'Chionoides'). Another native is <i>R. maximum</i> (Rosebay rhododendron), which grows in full shade and flowers later in June. Small-leaf forms have 1-6" flower heads in Apr-May, prefer full sun and often turn a bronzy-eggplant color in winter. All rhodies need to be protected from windburn in winter, and are difficult to prune without losing the next season's flowers.
Sarcococca	<i>Sarcococca hookeriana</i>	2-4'	A broadleaf evergreen with small shiny dark green leaves and subtle flowers in very early spring are deliciously fragrant.
Siberian Carpet Cypress	<i>Microbiota decussata</i>	1-2'	A needled evergreen with soft, flattened sprays of cedar-like needles; tolerates part shade; turns purplish-brown in winter; does not like wet feet. Beautiful as a spreading groundcover under a birch grove.
Skimmia	<i>Skimmia japonica</i>	2-4'	A beautiful broadleaf evergreen with a wide-spreading habit and glossy green leaves. Both male and female plants exist; both are needed for berry set. The red berries persist through the winter. Male plants usually have showier flowers. Needs shade; will burn in full sun. Plants generally available in the Nursery trade are usually quite small.
Threadleaf Cypress	<i>Chamaecyparis pisifera</i>	3-10'	A needled evergreen shrub with a range of foliage colors and textures; requires full sun; doesn't tolerate wet feet. Common cultivars include: 'Filifera Aurea' (Golden Threadleaf Cypress), 'Gold Mops' (mounded, somewhat irregular habit that is not amenable to being sheared), 'Shiva' (feathery blue-green foliage and upright pyramidal form). Note: it's important to know which of the many cultivars you are getting, because there is a lot of variability in their mature sizes. Some that are commonly sold at small sizes (like 'Gold Mops') are not dwarf forms and will grow substantially larger.