

FOUNDATION PLANTS

[Note: several foundation plant schemes are described below; hence there is some repetition of plants.]

At the corner of the steps, add three columnar hollies (*Ilex crenata* ‘Sky Pencil’ spaced 2-3’ apart; they will grow to 10’ X 3’ and fill in that vacant space nicely.

There is a space between the first and second windows for a Viburnum—for fragrance a Koreanspice Viburnum (*Viburnum x carlesii*) or a Winterthur Viburnum (*V. nudum*) or a Doublefile Viburnum (*V. plicatum* var. *tomentosum*). Keep them pruned and in control in the future, but they are easy to prune (i.e., after they blossom).

Remove the expanding Japanese Hollies in front of the garage windows. Replace with small shrubs: Drooping Leucothoes (*Leucothoe fontanesiana* ‘Nana’) a 2-4’ evergreen, arching shrub which is Native and **likes partial or full shade**; has fragrant white flowers in the Spring. Plant the same number of Cherry Laurels (*Prunus laurocerasus*), which have white blooms in April-May, are fragrant, have purple-blue fruit, and love the **shade**.

Under the living room windows plant a Thread Leaf Cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*) which comes in green or golden colors and grows to about 4-5’ and can be pruned. Next to it, you might want to plant a Korean Spice Viburnum (*Viburnum x carlesii*) or an Oakleaf Hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Pee Wee’ or *H. q.* ‘Alice’ or ‘Sikes Dwarf’) which will grow 4-6’ but keep both pruned to the same height as the cypress—that is, so that they do not grow above the windows. The latter have showy white flowers, fall color, faded flower racemes for winter interest. Cut them off in the Spring when plant starts growing.

In front of the Oakleaf Hydrangea plant groups of evergreen *Skimmia* spp. which have red or white fruit for winter interest—can be short (2’) or tall (20’), so choose carefully. You will need at least one male for a group of females in order to produce spring flowers and Fall fruit. *Skimmia reevesiana* (*Skimmia japonica reevesiana*) grows 2’ X 3’ and forms a compact mound with white flowers in the Spring, followed by oval, crimson fruit. This cultivar produces bisexual flowers; so it can produce fruit with no need for a male for pollination.

[Note: this section talks about extending an expanded foundation bed to include an existing tree.] As you extend the foundation bed out and around the existing Kousa Dogwood, you could put a pink flowering- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron carolinianum* or *R.* ‘PJM’ or *R. roseum*), or perhaps add another Hydrangea in the middle and the another pink flowering Rhododendron on the other side.

Or, you could substitute Native shrubs of the same rather **low size** for the front of the bed (i.e., in front of the Rhododendrons and Hydranges(s). You could use a deciduous shrub like Clethra (*Clethra alnifolia* ‘Hummingbird’) which grows to about 3’ deciduous, fragrant white spires in Summer and yellow Fall color, or Fothergilla (*Fothergilla gardenia*) which grows to about 3-4’, or Itea (*Itea virginica* ‘Henry Garnet’) which can grow to 6’ but can also be pruned to shape.

In front of the Clethra, group odd numbers of semi-evergreen *Leucothoe racemosa* or evergreen *Leucothoe fontanesiana* ‘Nana’ or ‘Compacta’—dependent upon how much sun is there since they like **shade**.

Some non-Native shrubs of the same **rather low size** for the front of the bed could include the following: Glossy Abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora* ‘Prostata’ or ‘Sherwood’) at 3-8’, Kalmia or Mountain Laurel, Bog Rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) which is only 2-5’, or Daphne (*Daphne odora*) at 3-4’. Since the area is relatively shaded, you are limited in terms of what you can plant.

[Note: the Expert Eye client had ripped out most foundation plants and wanted to extend the foundation plant beds out into the lawn.]

REPLACE AN ALBERTA SPRUCE NEXT TO THE FRONT DOOR: use an Hinoki Cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtuse* ‘Nana Gracilis’), False-Holly (*Osmanthus heterophyllus*), Japanese Pieris (*Pieris japonica*), Sasanqua Camellia (*Camellia sasanqua*), or Winter Daphne (*Daphne odora*) for evergreens. For deciduous shrubs: Korean Spice Viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii* ‘Compactum’) for its fragrant flowrwes, Glossy Abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora*) or Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia x indica*).

For the corners of the house: broad-leaved evergreen shrub is Florida Anise-Tree (*Illicium floridanum*) which can be trained into a tree form by retaining one main stem. It grows relatively fast and has small maroon flowers in the Spring. It grows 15-20.’ Deciduous trees could include River Birch (*Betula nigra* ‘Heritage’) with exfoliating bark and mature height 30-50.’ Apple Serviceberry (*Amelanchier x grandiflora* ‘Robin Hill’) that has large, pink flower buds and yellow to red color in Fall, growing 20-30.’ Redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*) with pink flowers that appear before the leaves, growing 15-30.’

Layering of foundation plants: background foundation plants including Inkberry (*Ilex glabra* ‘Ivory Queen,’ ‘Leucocarpa’ or ‘Alba’ all have white fruit, are evergreen, and grow to 6- 8’). *Ilex glabra* ‘Nigra’ is also evergreen but has black fruit. It is a female plant. It grow 2 ½ X 3.’” Inkberry plants tend to get “leggy,” but respond to pruning and can be kept full and bushy.

[Another Expert Eye report]: During our visit we discussed various **“foundation plantings”** to replace your azaleas. Some evergreen possibilities include *Ilex crenata* ‘Helleri,’ a low-maintenance holly that grows 3-4’ high and 4-5’ wide; *Juniperus squamata* ‘Blue Star’ which boasts silvery-blue needles and grows to 2-3’ tall and 4’ wide; and *Raphiolepis xdelacourii* ‘Georgia Petite’ (Indian Hawthorn) that has a pink flower in the spring and grows to 2½’ tall and 3½’ wide. *Prunus laurocerasus* ‘Otto Luyken’ is another option; a -compact dwarf Cherry Laurel that grows to 3-4’ tall and 6-7’ wide with fragrant white spike flowers in mid-spring that transform to black fruits in mid-summer. Cherry laurel also takes pruning well. Because your *Stewartia* is deciduous, if you planted evergreen shrubs against your house, it would provide an interesting contrast.

To each side of the front door we originally suggested andromeda (*Pieris japonica*), but on further reflection, this plant will not reach the size that is required. As alternatives you could plant Sawara ‘Golden Mop’ (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*), if you like a chartreuse evergreen or mugo pines (*Pinus mugo*). *Skimmia japonica*, a 3-4 foot high slow-growing evergreen that blooms in late winter and has many of the attributes of a holly, including red berries, as well as sweetbox, (*Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *humilis*), another evergreen that does not grow over 3 feet, are good choices to replace the azaleas.

On the corner, you have a nice area of broken shade where you could have a single specimen rhododendron. With some selective pruning you will be able to keep it to a manageable size. A Japanese acuba (*Aucuba japonica*) could be a good accent plant. It doesn’t have any flowers of consequence but it is grown for its foliage.

Take a garden hose and outline a bed from the concrete pad at the front entrance to around the northeast corner to form a bed. Make it far enough out from the corner to accommodate a small under story tree such as a *Cercis canadensis* (Eastern Redbud) ‘Forest Pansy’ with purple leaves, *Chionanthus virginicus* (White Fringetree), *Amelanchier arborea* (Downy Serviceberry), *A. canadensis* (Shadbush) or *Cornus kousa* (Korean dogwood).

[another Expert Eye visit]: In front of the house under the windows, an evergreen such as *Ilex hellerii* (Helleri Holly) would provide a background for bulbs in spring and annuals throughout the summer and fall. Plant groundcovers such as *Liriope* sp. (Lily turf), *Ajuga reptans* (Bugleweed), *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (Bearberry), *Euonymus fortunei* (Wintercreeper), *Juniperus horizontalis* ‘Bar Harbor’ (Creeping Juniper), *Pennisetum spp.* (Fountain grass), *Sedum spp.* (Sedums). The potted chrysanthemums currently by the front door could be planted in this bed in front of the house. The bed should continue around the corner for up to 10’.