

Winning Plant Combination: Hot & Cool Colors II

Kathy Bretz

With this new hot and cool color plant combination, the landscape target is the foundation across the front of my house and garage, because I am *so* ready to replace the holly *meatballs* the builder planted there! The drought last year took its toll on a few of them and their middles had to be pruned out. (I may have gotten a bit heavy-handed when pruning though, just to speed along their retirement.) Almost any color combination I choose should work well for this next hot and cool planting idea, because the gray siding on my home provides a neutral backdrop. However, I must keep in mind I already have many azaleas and flowering quince in my front yard with bloom color ranging from medium coral to deep orange-red. Based solely upon my own preferences, I'll choose to stay away from pinks and pale purples when planning this foundation garden.

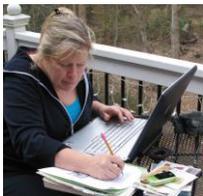
Because the front of my home faces south where conditions are normally pretty hot and dry, I want to pay special attention to drought tolerance. Factoring in potential drought conditions, some of the plants there will really cook. To help insure survival of my new plantings, I plan to bite the bullet and install drip irrigation after removing all of the existing holly trees and shrubs.

For height and color contrast against the house, I'll anchor my plan with three dark blue-green junipers such as 'Wichita Blue' or 'Blue Point'. Reaching a height of about 10-15 feet, these cool contributors will be situated at the three front corners. I'll also use 'Skyrocket' Junipers between the pairs of living room, dining room and garage windows, adding secondary height interest without using much garden space. These will grow about 8 feet tall but only about 2 feet in width. On either side of the front door, I'll place an 'Otto Luyken' Laurel. This pair should grow pretty quickly and will very effectively screen the sides of the front porch in a couple of years, while staying at heights that won't block the windows. For some color relief with all this green, I'll mix in a fothergilla beside one of the garage windows. Its spring white flowers are fragrant, but I'm really after the wonderful foliage colors of red, yellow and orange this shrub will wear in the fall. There's even an added bonus in the grey-white undersides of the leaves, which will echo the house color. All these plants together will provide the cool evergreen backbones of the foundation planting and a wonderful backdrop for the more colorful hot shades I'll use as my eye candy.

My favorite candy right now is the gold-hued false cypress. I love them so much I would plant them all across the front of my house if I didn't believe I'd get bored very quickly without more variety in plant color and texture. I'll be happy using just a few of these gorgeous gems in my foundation garden. Locating them in front of the Skyrocket junipers will really make them pop, giving terrific color contrast to the smaller plants around them. I'll look for one of the smaller varieties like 'Golden Mop', since I'll only want them to get about 4-5 feet tall and wide.

This is the really fun part of garden design for me—adding eye-popping hot colors that spice things up so nicely. To continue the orange color scheme of my existing azaleas, the new fothergilla and the quince, I'll plant 'Caramel' Heuchera in small groupings, along with a few mini-waves of orange tulips. Some little cooling drifts of white tulips and snowdrops and an edging of golden Creeping Jenny will complete the plantings and fill in the gaps until my trees and shrubs mature.

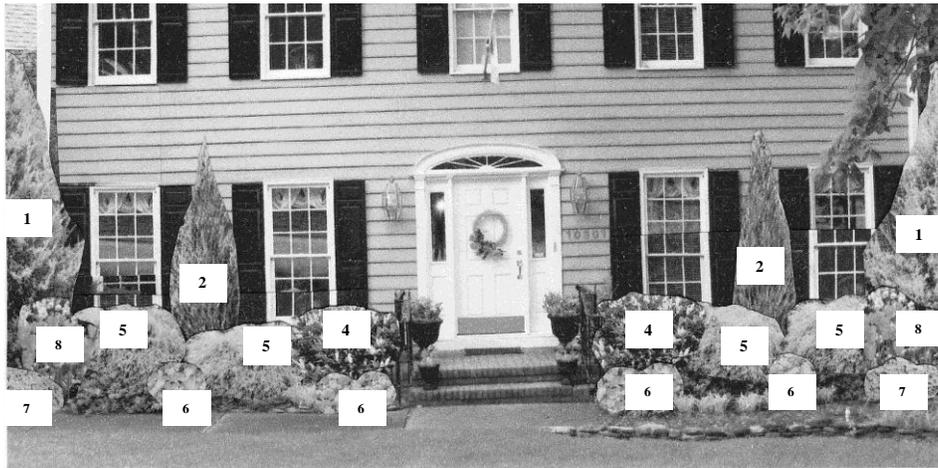
I wish I could provide a color picture here, but you will just have to use a little imagination along with my illustrations and plant list located on the next page. KB



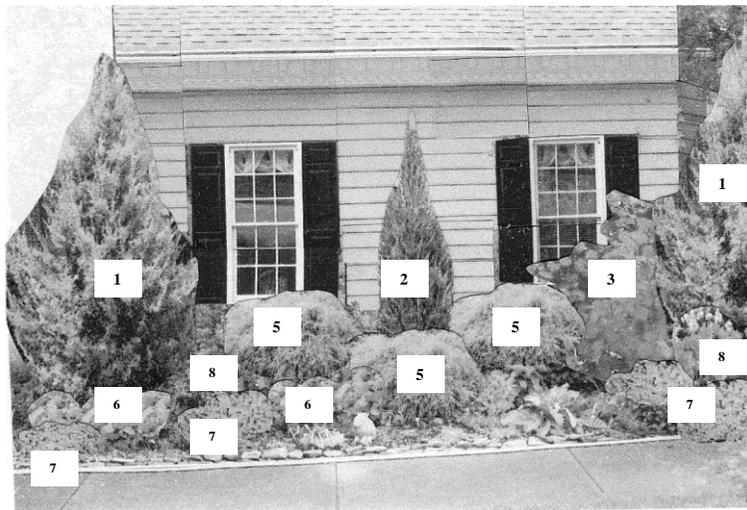
Kathy Bretz is an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer with Mecklenburg County, NC.

Plant List

- 1 *Juniperus scopulorum* 'Wichita Blue'
- 2 *Juniperus scopulorum* 'Skyrocket'
- 3 *Fothergilla gardenii* 'Mt Airy'
- 4 *Prunus laurocerasus* 'Otto Luyken'
- 5 *Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Golden Mop'
- 6 *Heuchera* 'Caramel'
- 7 *Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea'
- 8 *Tulipa* 'Orange Emperor' and 'Ice Princess'
Galanthus nivalis 'Elwesii' (not illustrated)



Front of House



Front of Garage