



WRITING SAMPLE

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Shrubs With Variegated Leaves & Small Pink Flowers

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The lively coloration of shrubs with variegated leaves can add lovely interest and texture to a landscape. Throw in some small, pink flowers, and many gardeners would herald the attractive combination, appreciating the visual contrast and, often, the fragrance these shrubs add to the landscape. And, of course, flowers on variegated shrubs aren't limited to pink – purple, yellow and white are also common.

Causes of Variegation

Variation in leaf color occurs because some of the plant cells are missing the green pigment chlorophyll. Variegation is usually the result of a cell mutation, and can occur randomly or be genetic. If genetic, the color change is stable, which means that if you propagate a green shoot from a plant with colored leaves or sow its seed, the new plant will have the same coloration. If the mutation is random, the color will not recur in subsequent generations. A relatively rare form of variegation can result from a viral infection, which shows as discolored veins or leaf areas. Variegated leaves occur rarely in nature but are common among cultivated indoor and outdoor plants, where they have been saved and propagated as horticultural oddities.

Types of Variegation

Variegated leaves take many forms. Some variegated bushes have only a fringe of white around the leaf, some have irregular dots and spots, some show off broad panels of white, and other shrubs sport the occasional leaf that is totally white. On a single plant, you might see leaves with varying degrees of variegation and perhaps even individual leaves or entire shoots that are entirely green. On the same plant, totally green leaves tend to be much larger than the variegated ones. Some very colorful variegated shrubs occur when the leaf cells produce patches of pink where chlorophyll is absent.

Large shrubs

Gardeners looking to fill a large spot in the landscape might want to consider one of these bigger variegated shrubs. Oleander (*Nerium oleander*), for example, offers some variegated varieties sporting bright pink flowers, such as Twist of Pink (*Oleander nerium* 'Twist of Pink'), a fairly new cultivar that can grow to 8 feet. Another large-growing choice is variegated mint bush (*Prostanthera ovalifolia* 'Variegata'), an evergreen Australian import that sprouts an abundance of pink-lavender blooms set off by white-edged leaves.

Compact shrubs

A variety of smallish (2-4 feet) variegated shrubs are available to add color and interest to your garden. Daphne 'Carol Mackie' (*Daphne x burkwoodii* 'Carol Mackie') is well-regarded for its grayish leaves, as well as its sweetly scented, small pink and white flowers. Confetti Abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora* 'Confetti') is a vigorous pink-bloomer that attracts birds and bees. Bees also love the tiny pink, trumpet-shaped flowers that bloom from spring through early summer on Weigela florida 'My Monet' (*Weigela florida* 'Monet'). All of these shrubs do well in USDA hardiness zones 8-10.