

Pyracantha x 'Teton'

By Kathy Upchurch

“Pyracantha”: The word conjures an image in my mind of the thorny monster that engulfed my front walk nearly every year for fifteen years despite annual and sometimes semi-annual pruning. Remember the thorny forest that grew up around Sleeping Beauty’s castle? My pyracantha had similar aspirations. It was a classic case of a good plant in the wrong place. I finally cut it down several years ago.

If only the original owners had planted the pyracantha cultivar ‘Teton’. It might still be there, growing straight and tall, covered with bright yellow-orange berries. In the Gilbert Garden, there are three Pyracantha x ‘Teton’ standing sentinel near the entrance to one of the woodland paths. They are each a good twelve feet tall and no more than four feet wide, if that. And... they are covered with eye-popping orange berries. What a sight!

Pyracantha x ‘Teton’ is one of six pyracantha cultivars introduced by the U.S. National Arboretum. All of these cultivars are highly resistant to fire blight and scab. Like most pyracanthas, ‘Teton’ is very tolerant of heat and drought, although it appreciates a nice layer of mulch. I have seen the maximum height listed as ranging from 10 feet to 20 feet. With its columnar shape, it should grow no wider than 4 –5 feet. Those in the Gilbert Garden were planted in 1993 and are approaching their “maximum” height.

‘Teton’ grows well in both sun and partial shade. In the Gilbert Garden, one of the three specimens is sited where it receives more sun than the other two, and it definitely has more berries. It is also the most upright of the three. The middle plant is starting to arch gracefully at the top. Dr. Bob has commented that this cultivar could be trained into a very nice archway. I can just imagine such an archway marking a grand entrance to a special garden.

In addition to the pyracanthas, there are many viburnums and hollies that have spectacular berries right now in the Gilbert Garden. Plus, the sasanquas are starting to bloom. I find a new favorite sasanqua every week. Come join us on our Thursday workdays and check out what this wonderful garden has to offer.