IN the horticultural world, a continuous effort is being made to select the "best" trees and shrubs for ornamental use. In the process, many other plants are relegated to secondary status and then are often ignored by the horticultural public. Later on, a few may show traits that were not obvious at first—and so bid for reconsideration. In other cases, one species has become entrenched in horticultural usage—and for this reason alone continues to overshadow later introductions. An occasional looking back through the lists of little-used plants can be expected to turn up a few that have been overshadowed by better-known relatives, but that have character of their own—and potential usefulness.

**Chionanthus retusus**  
Chinese Fringetree

Our native (southeastern U. S.) fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) is fairly well known, even though not widely used as a landscape plant in our area. Its oriental relative, *Chionanthus retusus*, is even less used, probably because its flowers and inflorescences are smaller. But the overall effect of *C. retusus* in bloom is almost as spectacular as that of *C. virginicus* (Plate I). In addition, it can be grown with minimal pruning, while *C. virginicus* requires heavy pruning every few years to maintain good form. The largest specimen of *C. retusus* in the Arnold Arboretum is about 20 feet tall and resembles a miniature American elm in outline. This and its interesting furrowed bark keep this tree interesting during the winter months (Plates I and II). Both species of *Chionanthus* are hardy in Boston, and *C. virginicus* is hardy in Zone 4 as well. The hardiness of *C. retusus* in areas colder than Boston is not yet fully known.

**Cotinus obovatus** (Cotinus americanus)  
American Smoke Tree

In this case, the American native is the less familiar of two species. The more common smoke tree, *Cotinus coggygria* (still listed as *Rhus cotinus* in some books),
is a native of Asia and southern Europe. *Cotinus obovatus*, native to the southeastern U.S., is the taller growing of the two species (up to 30 feet) and is of interest primarily for its sometimes-bright reddish-orange fall foliage. In the Arnold Arboretum it is displayed effectively in combination with *C. coggygria* and members of the related sumacs (*Rhus* species).

**Evodia hupehensis**

The Korean evodia (*Evodia danielli*) has been used in recent years as a small garden tree, and is of special interest to beekeepers. The lesser known Hupeh evodia (*E. hupehensis*), native to central China, is a larger tree, up to 50 feet in height. Both species have clusters of creamy white flowers in early August, followed by equally showy clusters of fruits, which open in autumn to disclose small shiny black seeds. Fruits of *E. danielli* are creamy-buff to pink, while those of *E. hupehensis* are dark reddish. Both species have smooth silvery-gray bark not unlike that of beech. Unfortunately both tend to be rather weak-wooded and short-lived. Their hardiness in areas colder than Boston is not yet known.

**Exochorda giraldii wilsonii**

The common pearlbush (*Exochorda racemosa*) was introduced into the United States from eastern China in 1849. This is still the only species of *Exochorda* that is at all common in the nursery trade, even though several other species and varieties have been introduced from Asia since. In *Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs*, Alfred Rehder singled out *Exochorda giraldii wilsonii*, a Wilson introduction from northwestern China in 1907, as being more handsome than the more common *E. racemosa* (Plate III). It is more floriferous than the latter species and has larger flowers as well. Rehder rated *E. giraldii wilsonii* as hardy in Zone 5, making it appear that it is somewhat less hardy than *E. racemosa*. This may or may not be true. Hardiness zone ratings of some of the less common species are necessarily conservative, for lack of opportunity to observe them in colder places than Boston. If the Wilson pearlbush in time wins greater acceptance as a landscape shrub, the extent of its hardiness will become better known.

**Larix kaempferi (Larix leptolepis)**

The Arnold Arboretum larch collection includes 8 species, but only the American larch (*Larix laricina*) and the European larch (*L. decidua*) have been very widely used in this country as ornamental trees. In *Trees for American Gardens*, Donald Wyman has pointed out that the Japanese larch (correct name *L. kaempferi* but also known as *L. leptolepis*) is the most ornamental of the larches. It is also the most vigorous, and is being favored increasingly as a forest tree for timber production. *Larix kaempferi* holds its needles later into the fall than *L. decidua* and *L. laricina*, and is not so winter hardy as these species—but still hardy enough (Zone 4) for all but the coldest parts of New England.
The Chinese fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*) is interesting in winter (top) for its growth habit and furrowed bark, and in summer (bottom) for its masses of small white flowers.
PLATE II
The Chinese fringetree’s furrowed bark keeps it interesting in all seasons of the year.
PLATE III

The Wilson pearlbush (*Exochorda giraldbi wilsonii*) is the most floriferous of the pearlbushes (left) and has the largest flowers, up to 2 inches in diameter (right).
Pachysandra procumbens

Without question, Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*) is the best species of *Pachysandra* for ground cover use — in fact one of the best of all ground cover plants. Still, our native (southeastern U.S.) member of this genus, *Pachysandra procumbens*, can be useful and interesting. This species is not evergreen, as is *P. terminalis*. It is less successful as a quick, aggressive ground cover because it does not spread as vigorously. But its modest vigor can be an asset in certain small-scale situations, and it gains added interest when it sends up its spikes of whitish flowers just before leafing out in late spring. Like its Japanese relative, *Pachysandra procumbens* should be used only in shaded locations, and it should be used where reasonable amounts of soil moisture are available.

Tsuga diversifolia

Our native (eastern U.S.) hemlocks, the Canada hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) and the Carolina hemlock (*T. caroliniana*) are both widely used and are excellent ornamental trees. The Arboretum collection includes species native to the northwestern United States, China, and Japan. The smallest of these, except for dwarf forms, is the Japanese hemlock (*Tsuga diversifolia*) — a rather shrubby, dense, pyramidal tree with horizontal branching (Plate IV). Its needles are crowded on the twigs and radiate in many directions, showing the prominent white stomatal lines on the undersides. This tree may turn out to be winter hardy in areas colder than Boston. If it receives the increased use it deserves, the limits of its hardiness will eventually be better known than at present.

HARRISON L. FLINT
These two trees of Japanese hemlock (*Tsuga diversifolia*) in the Arnold Arboretum (top) show the dense, shrubby form typical of this species. The needles are crowded on the twigs and radiate in many directions, showing the prominent white stomatal lines underneath (bottom).