



# RETHINKING MAPLE SELECTING TREES FOR YOUR YARD

## A CASE FOR SPECIES DIVERSITY



**Pin Oak** *N*  
*Quercus palustris*  
60-70' tall; 20-40' wide  
fall color, shade, low pH soils,  
wet sites, windbreak

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Currently, maples make up more than one third of all trees in Iowa communities, creating great risk of tree loss from insects and disease. This guide helps match species needs with site characteristics, to create a healthy and resilient community forest with a diverse mix of trees.

Trees have a big impact on the character of a neighborhood, and a diverse mix of trees is necessary for maintaining a healthy and resilient community forest. Maple species currently represent more than one third of all trees in Iowa communities, creating great risk of tree loss due to insects or disease. Designed for both homeowners and city staff, this publication helps guide yard and street planting by matching species needs with site characteristics. By planting a wide variety of species well-suited for the site, you can help ensure a community's tree canopy is a valuable resource for the future.



**Swamp White Oak** *N*  
*Quercus bicolor*  
50-60' tall and wide  
shade, storm resistance, clay sites, wet sites

*N* - Native to Iowa

When selecting a tree, look for one that offers the benefits desired and matches the available space. Remember to consider the mature size. Be sure to look around the yard and neighborhood, and select a species that will add to the diversity on the block. Enjoy the interesting traits that different trees present throughout the year.

Below are trees that possess certain desirable characteristics. Some species are listed in more than one category.

#### **Vibrant Fall Color**

Fall color is the primary reason most homeowners are interested in planting maples, but the trees listed below rival maples for brilliant fall colors.

Large -- *bald cypress, black oak, dawn redwood, European larch, ginkgo, northern pin oak, northern red oak, pin oak, river birch, scarlet oak, shingle oak, shumard oak, sweetgum, tamarack, thornless honeylocust, white oak*  
Medium -- *blackgum, yellowwood*  
Small -- *blue beech, serviceberry*

#### **Fast Growing**

The trees below typically grow 3 feet or more per year, once established.

Large -- *dawn redwood, London planetree, river birch, sycamore, tuliptree*

#### **Spring Flowers**

Large -- *cucumbertree magnolia, tuliptree*  
Medium -- *yellowwood*  
Small -- *cornelian cherry dogwood, crabapple, eastern redbud, loebner magnolia, pagoda dogwood, saucer magnolia, serviceberry, star magnolia*

#### **Clay Tolerant**

Most newer developments have little topsoil, making them tough sites for trees. Use one of these clay-tolerant species where other trees might not grow.

Large -- *American elm, American linden, bitternut hickory, bur oak, concolor fir, eastern white pine, European larch, ginkgo, hackberry, Kentucky coffeetree, Norway spruce, river birch, shagbark hickory, swamp white oak, tamarack, thornless honeylocust, white pine*  
Small -- *blue beech, crabapple, pagoda dogwood, serviceberry*

#### **Tolerance to Compacted Soil**

Newly developed sites often have extremely compacted soils, which is a tough environment for trees to thrive. Choose one of the species below to give a new tree a fighting chance.

Large -- *American elm, American linden, bitternut hickory, bur oak, European larch, ginkgo, hackberry, Kentucky coffeetree, littleleaf linden, pin oak, river birch, swamp white oak, tamarack, thornless honeylocust*  
Small -- *eastern redbud, flowering crabapple*

#### **Salt Tolerant**

When planting in an area affected by deicing salt, it is wise to choose a species which is salt-tolerant.

Large -- *European larch, ginkgo, northern red oak, swamp white oak, tamarack, thornless honeylocust, white oak*

### Storm Resistant

Tired of cleaning up branches after storms? Consider the species below, as they are better able to resist storm damage.

Large -- *bald cypress, bitternut hickory, eastern hemlock, ginkgo, Kentucky coffeetree, littleleaf linden (Glenleven), silver linden, swamp white oak, sweetgum, white oak*

Medium -- *blackgum*

Small -- *blue beech, ironwood, redbud, serviceberry*

### Reduced raking

Don't like spending those beautiful fall days raking? Consider a species with smaller leaves that can be easily mowed. These trees have more dappled shade rather than full shade, and grass goes more easily beneath them. Be sure to look for seedless varieties!

Large -- *Kentucky coffeetree "Espresso" variety, tamarack, thornless honeylocust*

### Large Shade Trees

The larger the tree, the more shade it provides. Select these trees for the most shade.

*northern red oak, scarlet oak, shumard oak, black oak, bur oak, swamp white oak, chinkapin oak, white oak, shingle oak, pin oak, northern pin oak, ginkgo, sweetgum, tuliptree, cucumbertree magnolia, London planetree, sycamore, American linden, silver linden, littleleaf linden, hackberry, shagbark hickory, bitternut hickory*

### Small Space Trees

For smaller yards or under power lines, choose from these smaller stature trees.

*cornelian cherry dogwood, blue beech, eastern redbud, flowering crabapple, leobner magnolia, pagoda dogwood, saucer magnolia, serviceberry, star magnolia*

### Pollinator and Songbird Attractors

Choose from the species below to benefit pollinators and songbirds.

Larger -- *American elm, American linden, catalpa, hackberry, oak species, river birch, tuliptree*

Small -- *blue beech, flowering crabapple, pagoda dogwood, redbud, serviceberry*

Improve yards, neighborhoods, communities and the planet by planting a tree. Trees affect the way people feel and view the world around them. A few of the benefits of neighborhood trees include:

### INCREASED HOME VALUES

Yard trees increase resale value of homes by 3 to 15 percent.

### SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhoods with more trees have fewer reported crimes, less graffiti, vandalism and littering, and fewer acts of domestic violence.

### STRONGER COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

People report significantly better relations, and stronger feelings of unity and cohesion with their neighbors when their neighborhoods have more trees.



### Thornless Honeylocust *N*

*Gleditsia triacanthos*

*Skyline, Northern Acclaim, Shademaster*

30-70' tall and wide

fall color, filtered shade, reduced raking, drought tolerant, clay tolerant



### Serviceberry *N*

*Amelanchier X grandiflora*

20-25' tall and wide

spring flowers, fall color, shade, storm resistance, clay tolerance, small space, under powerlines, edible fruit, pollinator and songbird species, single or multi-stemmed

More specific tree information follows on the next pages. Be sure to look at all the benefits and requirements of each tree. Some species also list recommended varieties.

**Common Name** *N* = Native to Iowa

*Genus species*

*Variety*

Mature dimensions characteristics

# LARGE SHADE TREES

Typically, the larger the tree, the greater the benefits. These trees should be selected for sites with no overhead powerlines and plenty of room to grow.



**Black Oak** *N*  
*Quercus velutina*  
50-60' tall and wide  
fall color, shade, clay sites



**Bur Oak** *N*  
*Quercus macrocarpa*  
70-80' tall and wide  
shade, storm resistance, clay sites, wet sites



**Chinkapin Oak** *N*  
*Quercus muehlenbergii*  
40-80' tall; 40-50' wide  
shade

**Pin Oak** *N*  
*Quercus palustris*  
See front cover

**Swamp White Oak** *N*  
*Quercus bicolor*  
See page 2



**Northern Pin Oak** *N*  
*Quercus ellipsoidalis*  
60-80' tall; 20-40' wide  
fall color, shade, high pH soils



**Northern Red Oak** *N*  
*Quercus rubra*  
60-75' tall and wide  
fall color, shade



**Scarlet Oak**  
*Quercus coccinea*  
70-75' tall; 40-50' wide  
fall color, shade

## SPACING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LARGE SHADE TREES

Before planting between the sidewalk and street, check city permit requirements and list of approved species. For large-growing shade trees, the grass strip between the sidewalk and street should be eight feet wide. Plant large-growing shade trees at least 25 to 30 feet apart. If planting near a building, the tree should be a distance of at least half its mature width from the building to prevent interference from the branches.



**Shingle Oak** *N*  
*Quercus imbricaria*  
50-80' tall and wide  
fall color, shade, windbreak



**Shumard Oak**  
*Quercus shumardii*  
40-60' tall and wide  
fall color, shade



**White Oak** *N*  
*Quercus alba*  
50-80' tall and wide  
fall color, shade, storm resistance

**Thornless Honeylocust** *N*  
*Gleditsia triacanthos*  
*Skyline, Northern Acclaim, Shademaster*  
See page 3

*N* = Native to Iowa



**River Birch** *N*  
*Betula nigra*  
40-60' tall and wide  
fall color, shade, clay sites,  
wet sites  
single or multi-stemmed



**Bitternut Hickory** *N*  
*Carya cordiformis*  
50-80' tall; 30-50' wide  
shade, clay tolerant, storm  
resistant



**Shagbark Hickory** *N*  
*Carya ovata*  
70-90' tall; 50-70' wide  
shade, clay tolerant, storm  
resistant



**Hackberry** *N*  
*Celtis occidentalis*  
40-60' tall and wide  
shade, wet sites, dry sites,  
pollinator & songbird species



**Turkish Filbert**  
*Corylus colurna*  
40-50' tall; 20-30' wide  
shade



**Ginkgo**  
Ginkgo-seedless cultivars  
*Autumn Gold, Presidential Gold*  
50-80' tall and wide  
fall color, shade, storm  
resistance, reduced raking



**Kentucky Coffeetree** *N*  
*Gymnocladus dioica*  
*Espresso* (seedless)  
60-75' tall; 40-50' wide  
storm resistance, reduced  
raking (*Espresso* only), shade



**Sweetgum**  
*Liquidambar styraciflua*  
75' tall; 40-50' wide  
fall color, shade, storm  
resistance  
Hardy in zone 5 only



**Tuliptree**  
*Liriodendron tulipifera*  
70-90' tall; 35-50' wide  
shade, wet sites, fast growing,  
spring flowers



**Cucumbertree Magnolia**  
*Magnolia acuminata*  
50-80' tall and wide  
shade, spring flowers



**London Planetree**  
*Platanus X acerifolia*  
*Exclamation*  
70-100' tall; 65- 80' wide  
shade, wet sites, fast growing



**Sycamore** *N*  
*Platanus occidentalis*  
75-100' tall and wide  
shade, wet sites, fast growing



**American Linden** *N*  
*Tilia Americana*  
*American Sentry, Front Yard*  
60-80' tall; 20-40' wide  
shade, pollinator species, wet  
sites, clay tolerant



**Littleleaf linden**  
*Tilia cordata*  
*Glenleven*  
60-70' tall; 30-40' wide  
shade, clay tolerant, storm  
resistant



**Silver Linden**  
*Tilia tomentosa*  
50-70' tall; 25-45' wide  
shade, storm resistance, clay  
sites



**American Elm** *N*  
*Ulmus Americana*  
*Jefferson, Princeton, Prairie  
Expedition*  
60-80' tall; 30-50' wide  
shade, clay tolerant

# MEDIUM SHADE TREES

These trees can provide very nice shade for a smaller area. If planting between the sidewalk and street, an six-foot wide grass strip is required.



**Blackgum**  
*Nyssa Sylvatica*  
30-50' tall; 20-30' wide  
fall color



**Ironwood (Hophornbeam) N**  
*Ostrya virginiana*  
25-40' tall; 20-40' wide  
small space, storm resistance



**Yellowwood**  
*Cladrastis kentukea*  
30-50' tall; 40-55' wide  
spring flowers, fall color,

# LOW-GROWING TREES

These typically stay under 30 feet tall and are suitable for smaller spaces and under powerlines. If planting between the sidewalk and street, a minimum five-foot wide grass strip is necessary.

**Serviceberry N**  
*Amelanchier X grandiflora*  
See page 3



**Blue Beech (Hornbeam) N**  
*Carpinus caroliniana*  
20-30' tall and wide  
fall color, small space, under powerlines, storm resistance, clay tolerant



**Eastern Redbud N**  
*Cercis canadensis*  
20-30' tall; 25-35' wide  
spring flowers, storm resistant, small space, under powerlines  
single or multi-stemmed



**Flowering Crabapple**  
*Malus* sp.  
12-25' tall and wide  
spring flowers



**Loebner Magnolia**  
*Magnolia X loebneri*  
*Leonard Messel, Merrill, Ballerina*  
20-30' tall and wide  
spring flowers  
typically multi-stemmed



**Pagoda Dogwood N**  
*Cornus alternifolia*  
15-25' tall and wide  
spring flowers, pollinator and songbird species, small space, under powerlines  
requires partial to full shade



**Saucer Magnolia**  
*Magnolia X soulangeana*  
20-30' tall and wide  
spring flower  
hardy to zone 5 only



**Star Magnolia**  
*Magnolia stellata*  
15-20' tall; 40-50' wide  
spring flowers  
typically multi-stemmed

# DECIDUOUS CONIFERS

These trees resemble evergreens, but lose their needles in winter.



**Bald Cypress**  
*Taxodium distichum*  
50-70' tall; 20-30' wide  
shade, fall color, storm  
resistant, wet sites



**Dawn Redwood**  
*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*  
70-100' tall; 25' wide  
shade, fall color, fast growing  
hardy to zone 5 only



**European Larch**  
*Larix decidua*  
70-75' tall; 25-30' wide  
fall color, clay sites



**Tamarack**  
*Larix laricina*  
*Glenleven*  
30-50' tall; 20-35' wide  
clay tolerant, fall color

# EVERGREENS



**Concolor Fir**  
*Abies concolor*  
40-70' tall; 20-30' wide  
shade, clay tolerant



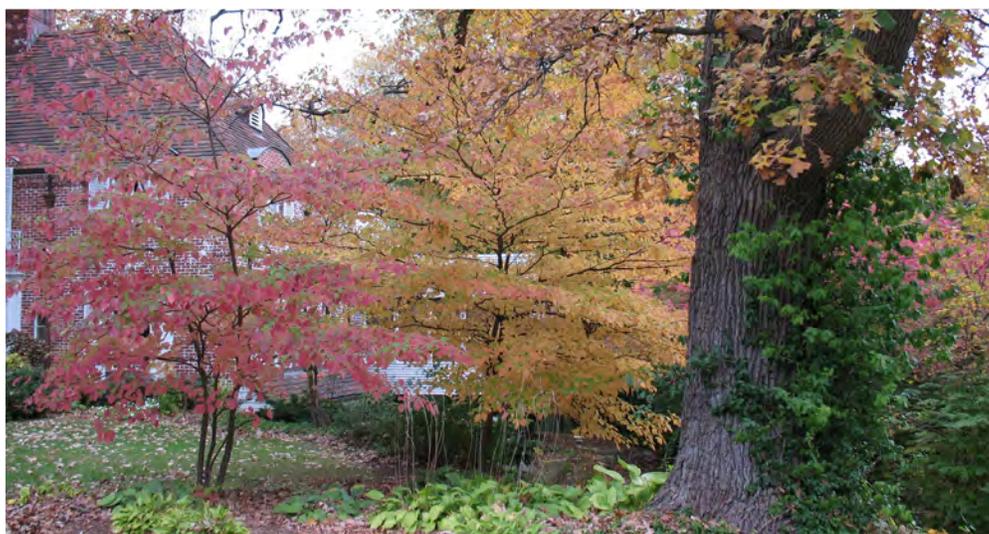
**Eastern Hemlock**  
*Tsuga canadensis*  
40-70' tall; 25-35' wide  
shade, storm resistant



**Norway Spruce**  
*Picea abies*  
40-60' tall; 25-30' wide  
shade, clay tolerant, windbreak



**White Pine** *N*  
*Pinus strobus*  
50-80' tall; 20-40' wide  
shade, clay tolerant



*N* = Native to Iowa

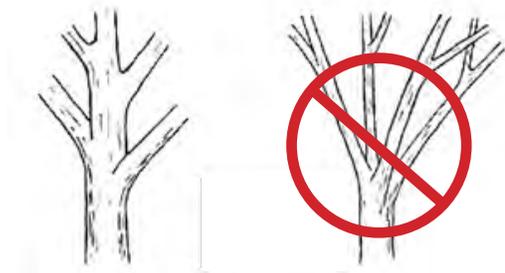
# SELECTING AND PLANTING YOUR TREE

Tree selection shouldn't be based on species alone. Selecting a quality tree from the nursery will help insure generations benefit from the tree. Look for the following for a quality tree selection:

1. Trunk diameter and taper is sufficient to keep the tree vertical without the support of a nursery stake.



2. Large-growing shade trees should have a central leader -- a single, relatively straight vertical main stem, free of co-dominant stems



3. Main branches are well-spaced.



4. No circling or kinked roots in the rootball.

Purchasing a tree in an "air-pruned" pot is the best way to avoid this.

If purchasing a tree in

a hard-plastic pot, slip the tree out of the pot and inspect the rootball to insure there are no woody roots circling the stem or outside of the rootball. The uppermost roots should be within one inch of the soil surface.

## CONDITION OF THE ROOTS

- Locate where the trunk flares out and becomes the roots. This spot, called the root flare, should be located at ground level, not below. The flare turns into the large supporting roots. They may be visible on the surface or covered by a couple inches of soil. These large supporting roots will help identify the correct depth to dig the hole. Planting trees too deep causes premature death from circling or girdling roots, and increases the likelihood of the tree falling over in high winds.
- Inspect the root mass for circling and girdling roots by placing the tree on its side and removing the entire container. If the tree is pot-bound and has roots circling the root mass, cut off the entire outside ¼-inch of the root mass, including the bottom, with a sharp shovel or pruning saw.

## SIZE AND SHAPE OF THE HOLE

- Dig a hole with a diameter two to three times the width of the tree's container. Typically the hole should be 10 to 12 inches deep, but look for the root flare on the tree. This should be at or slightly above ground level after planting.
- Loosen up surface roots and straighten out any large roots.
- Keep the root flare of the tree even with the ground level.
- Be sure the tree is straight before backfilling the planting hole.

## BACKFILLING THE HOLE

- Do not substitute planting hole soil with mulch, compost or fertilizers.
- Backfill the planting hole, taking care to break up soil chunks.
- Lightly step around the tree base to firm up soil.

## MULCHING

- Place three to four inches of organic mulch around the tree in a saucer shape, 18 to 36 inches wide. Organic mulch, such as composted wood chips, greatly enhances tree growth.
- Keep organic mulch three inches away from the base of the tree to prevent moisture buildup on the bark.

## INITIAL WATERING

- Water the tree slowly and thoroughly to eliminate air pockets in soil. Initial watering should be approximately 10 to 15 gallons of water or until the water stands for a few seconds. Water is critical for tree survival during the first few years.
- Water two gallons for every inch diameter of the tree trunk one to three times per week for the first two years. During draught, water more frequently.



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