

## Trees for Greater Kansas City

### Powell Gardens' Top Picks

**Large Shade Trees:** These trees need space and will easily reach 50 feet or more in height!

**Small Trees:** 15 feet to 30 feet or so at maturity, often multi-trunked.

**Trees for street tree use** where there are no overhead wires and roads and sidewalks will cover much of the tree's roots. These trees are often wild on flood plains and are tolerant of a wide range of disturbed soils and wet to dry conditions.

#### **Large Shade Trees:**

Ginkgo *Ginkgo biloba*

Male cultivars only (no odorous and messy fruit): 'Autumn Gold', etc.

Kentucky Coffeetree *Gymnocladus dioica*

Male, pod-less varieties are sometimes available

Swamp White Oak *Quercus bicolor*

Willow Oak *Quercus phellos*

Missouri native or proven strains only. Do not buy if shipped in from the South

Shumard Oak *Quercus shumardii*

Lacebark Elm *Ulmus parvifolia*

Cultivars: 'Athena', 'Allee', 'Bosque', 'Emerald Prairie'

#### **Evergreen Trees:**

There are no reliable evergreen trees adapted to street tree use in our region:

Bracken's Brown Beauty Southern Magnolia *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Bracken's Brown Beauty': trial in wind sheltered, warm urban "heat island" locales.

Moonglow Sweetbay Magnolia *Magnolia virginiana* 'Wilson': trial in wind sheltered locales where the soil will never dry out. A solution for poor drainage settings.

Virtually all needle-leaf (conifer) evergreens will not tolerate such tough conditions.

#### **Small Trees for Street Trees:** (good for where overhead wires are present)

Trident Maple *Acer buergerianum*

Shantung Maple *Acer truncatum*

Oklahoma Redbud *Cercis canadensis* var *reniformis* 'Oklahoma' or 'Oklahoma White' Trunks do not recline with age like native redbud – so fine in tight spaces

Upright Flowering Crabapples *Malus*: 'Adirondack' (white), 'Pink Spires' (pink), 'Royal Raindrops' (near red).

Peking Lilac *Syringa pekinensis*

'China Snow'

**Trees for lawns and gardens in full sun**, with good drainage; open and windswept locations. Trees native to floodplains or open savannas and glades.

**Shade Trees:**

Hackberry *Celtis occidentalis*

Kentucky Coffeetree *Gymnocladus dioica*

Male, pod-less varieties are sometimes available

Shingle Oak *Quercus imbricaria*

Bur Oak *Quercus macrocarpa*

Chinkapin Oak *Quercus muehlenbergii*

Post Oak *Quercus stellata*

**Evergreen Trees:**

Concolor Fir *Abies concolor*

Norway Spruce *Picea abies*

Blackhills Spruce *Picea glauca* 'Densata'

Blue Spruce *Picea pungens*

Lacebark Pine *Pinus bungeana*

Limber Pine *Pinus flexilis*

**Small Trees for Open Lawns:**

Redbud *Cercis canadensis*: allow to become multi-trunked, older trunks usually recline with age and plants can become living sculptures. Many new cultivars: 'Appalachian Red' (deep pink), 'Flame' (double flowers), 'Hearts of Gold' (new leaves golden), 'Pauline Lily' (soft pearly pink), 'Royal White', 'Snow Cloud' (variegated white in spring), 'Tennessee Pink',

Winter King Hawthorn *Crataegus viridis* 'Winter King'

Cornelian-Cherry *Cornus mas*

Many new cultivars with variegated or golden leaves

Possumhaw *Ilex decidua*: female with dazzling red fruit in fall – winter; like most hollies, fruiting plants require a male pollinator

Flowering Crabapples *Malus*: select from recommended, disease resistant cultivars.

Blackhaw Viburnum *Viburnum prunifolium*

**Trees for sheltered lawns and gardens, with good drainage** where there is wind protection and partial shade from other trees or a house or building. These are trees native to moist, sheltered woodlands.

**Shade Trees:**

Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*

Local wild strains and proven cultivars: 'Commemoration', 'Green Mountain', 'Fall Fiesta', 'Legacy'

Tulip Tree *Liriodendron tulipifera*

Cucumber Tree *Magnolia acuminata*

White Oak *Quercus alba* (difficult to find and transplant but the queen of trees)

Northern Red Oak *Quercus rubra*

American Linden or Basswood *Tilia americana*

'Frontyard', 'Redmond',

**Evergreen Trees:**

Alaska-Cedar *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*

'Pendula' is virtually the only available cultivar

American Holly *Ilex opaca*

Eastern White Pine *Pinus strobus*

'Fastigiata' is a more upright and ice resistant cultivar

Upright Japanese Yew *Taxus cuspidata* 'Capitata'

Western Arborvitae *Thuja plicata* mainly available as 'Spring Grove' or the hybrid cultivar 'Green Giant'

Eastern Hemlock *Tsuga canadensis*

**Small Trees:**

Three-flower Maple *Acer triflorum*

Pawpaw *Asimina triloba*

American Hornbeam *Carpinus caroliniana*

Fringetree *Chionanthus virginicus*

Flowering Dogwood *Cornus florida*

Many cultivars with pink flowers or variegated leaves. 'Ozark Spring' & 'Prairie Pink' are Kansas proven selections best for our area but hard to find

Kousa Dogwood *Cornus kousa*

Many cultivars with pink flowers or variegated leaves

**Trees for areas with poor drainage** or occasional water; rain gardens & wetlands:  
Trees native to flood plains and around wetlands.

**Shade Trees:**

River Birch *Betula nigra*

‘Dura Heat’, ‘Heritage’

Sweetgum *Liquidambar styraciflua*

Sweetgum fruit “gum balls” can be a nuisance but make nice mulch in groundcover plantings or slug deterrent for hosta plantings. ‘Cherokee’ is a nearly fruitless cultivar.

Sycamore *Platanus occidentalis* (make sure there is space for this massive tree, and accept that it may leaf out late from anthracnose after wet springs).

Swamp White Oak *Quercus bicolor*

Pin Oak *Quercus palustris*

Allow branches naturally to skirt to the ground

Baldcypress *Taxodium distichum*

Some cultivars are available mailorder

**Evergreen Trees:** a very challenging “right plant, right place for our climate!”

Southern Sweetbay Magnolia *Magnolia virginiana* var. *australis*

Cultivars: ‘Henry Hicks’, ‘Moonglow’

American Arborvitae or Northern White Cedar *Thuja occidentalis* (with afternoon shade or irrigation in summer dry spells) many cultivars

**Small Trees:**

Red Buckeye *Aesculus pavia*

Dwarf River Birch *Betula nigra* ‘Fox Valley’

Buttonbush *Cephalanthus occidentalis* (can readily be trimmed into a small, multi-trunked tree).

Winter King Hawthorn *Crataegus viridis* ‘Winter King’

Possumhaw *Ilex decidua*

Sweetbay Magnolia *Magnolia virginiana*

**No tree is perfect, all have attributes and liabilities:** we left off the following recommended trees because...

Hybrid Red – Silver Maples *Acer x freemanii* (have not been impressed by their fall color here)

Norway Maple *Acer platanoides* (a noxious weed east of here, little value to the ecosystem, sunscald is a severe problem)

Red Maple *Acer rubrum* (planted to the exclusion of others, we need to diversify our urban forest! Sunscald is a severe problem)

Ash trees *Fraxinus* all species (concern with spread of emerald ash borer)

Thornless Honeylocust *Gleditsia triacanthos* cultivars (mired by mimosa webworm throughout the region – far worse than mimosa trees!) oddly, native honeylocusts (with thorns and pods) seem immune.

London Plane Tree *Platanus x acerifolia* naturally hybridizes with native sycamores causing gene pollution.

Sawtooth Oak *Quercus acutissima* Holds leaves late so is repeatedly subject to early snow and ice damage.

Littleleaf Linden *Tilia cordata*: they have been very short-lived for us with severe sunscald problems.

Japanese Zelkova *Zelkova serrata*: have severe girdling root problems, repeated ice and freeze damage

Common Shade Tree mistakes:

Planted beneath power lines – condemned to a life of hard pruning

Planted in a tight space – for 5 year impact – not envisioning how large the tree will become (river birch is often planted this way).

Know underground utilities:

Keep trees with water seeking roots away from sewer lines and septic systems. Silver maples, willows, cottonwoods, river birch and sweetgum are such trees.

Planting trees for quick shade: Silver Maples, Willows, and Cottonwoods become humongous trees that are fine for an open swale or creek restoration but not for confined yards or near utilities!