

# SHADE TREES

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There is nothing quite as valuable as a shade tree when summer rolls around and the mercury starts to rise. In the spring, the smaller flowering trees provide great entertainment, your annuals and perennials are a color riot, and your shrubs have all had their time. But a shade tree can be a lifesaver, your best friend, a plant whose usefulness is not fleeting, but can last for generations. So what do you plant? How will you know? What are the differences in trees? Those questions (and more) are answered here. So read through, ask as many questions as you need to, get whatever help you may need, and get your tree home and started on its way. A well chosen shade tree is a great thing, and we're here to help you find that perfect tree!

**Acer- Maple** The king of the shade tree, more Maples are planted than just about anything else. For maple information, please see the sheet on maples.

**Betula- Birch** When asked about birches, many people have a definite opinion. The truth is, a few birches, misplaced and misplanted, have given the others a bad name. The birch is a beautiful and versatile tree, and is a great asset to anyone owning one. Probably the best variety for shade is the **Himalayan White Birch**, or **Betula jacquemontii**. This tree takes all of the rumors about birches and proves them wrong. It is a very upright, oval shaped tree (Much like a Red Sunset Maple), with stout branching and an even growth habit to 40' tall x 25' wide. Its leaves are large, deep green and glossy. And its bark is whiter than any other birch around, and it stays white for much longer. It is very pest and disease resistant, and will tolerate moist areas. An all around excellent tree. Other birches include **Betula pendula**, or the **European White Birch** and its offspring, which are the traditional birches. They are often planted in clumps of three, and tend to have a much more open and airy look than the Himalayan. A close relative of that is **Betula platyphylla japonica**, The **Japanese White Birch**. This tree is usually more heat tolerant than the European, and is relatively resistant to insect problems.

**Carpinus japonicus- Japanese or Asian Hornbeam** Not overly common, this tree is widely deserving of more attention. Its growth habit is arching/spreading, making a sort of wide vase shape. The leaves on this tree are fairly small, with deeply punched veins, it looks like someone folded the leaves, ironed them, then unfolded them. It is a very clean tree, it only drops a minor amount of inert seed debris. The fall color is a rich yellow. This tree gets to about 50' tall and 25'-30' wide.

**Fraxinus- Ash** Another very popular shade tree, Ashes are known for their toughness and well-behaved demeanor. A few varieties are: **F. Americana 'Autumn Purple'** which gets a nice purplish-red fall color, and **F. Americana 'Rose Hill'** which gets a more wine red fall color. **Fraxinus oxycarpa 'Raywood'** is well known for its brilliant red fall color, smaller leaves, and uniform branching pattern. **Fraxinus pennsylvanica 'Summit'** and **F.p. 'Marshall's seedless'** are very similar, with yellow fall color, and no seed. **F. pennsylvanica 'Cimmarron'** is very similar, but with orange-red fall color. All of the ashes are well adapted to hot, dry, areas, and are well adapted as street trees. All except for 'Raywood' also perform well in wet areas. Most of these can reach 40'-50' in time, the spread is variable. Ashes are a good all around selection.

**Ginkgo biloba- Ginkgo** The Ginkgo has been on this earth for longer than any other tree, and is still going strong. It grows fairly slow, but in time it develops a very beautiful, dense look. One of its common names is "Maidenhair tree". The Ginkgo is one of the most adaptable trees available, able to grow pretty much anywhere in the United States. Some varieties include '**Autumn Gold**', known for its golden-yellow fall color, '**Princeton Sentry**', which is very narrow and upright, and '**Shangri-La**', which has a more compact, dense, and uniform habit to it. Most of these will reach about 45' tall, while some older specimens go on to reach 80'+. Spread is generally 25'-35', with the 'Princeton Sentry' coming in at a narrow 15'. All of our selections are seedless, which is a great relief to anyone who has ever encountered Ginkgo fruit.

**Gleditsia triacanthos- Honeylocust** Anyone who has ever been to the Midwest has probably seen this tree, as it is one of the favorites for that area. It is extremely heat, cold, and drought tolerant. And all of the varieties we carry are actual improvements, believe it or not. The Honeylocust has very small leaflets, an arching shape, and a generally graceful form. It is a more open tree, allowing filtered sunlight, and allowing more plants to grow underneath. Its small leaves tend to disintegrate quickly upon hitting the ground, and so require minimal raking. Our two varieties are 'Sunburst', which has a bright yellow new growth, and 'Skyline', with its excellent branching and growth habit. Both varieties will reach about 45' tall, and 30'-35' wide.

**Liquidambar styraciflua- Sweetgum** A very popular tree, Sweetgums are valued for their rich fall color, in shades of yellows-oranges-red-and purples. They are often confused with maples due to the extreme similarity in the leaves. Their bark is also interesting, having a medium tan, corky, ridged texture. The growth habit is generally upright, pyramidal to a wide oval. Most will reach about 40'-45' tall, by 25'± wide. Some varieties include 'Moraine', which is very cold hardy, with darker green foliage than others and burgundy-red fall color, and 'Worplesdon', has a more intricate leaf than some of the others, and will get fall color in shades of orange and purple.

**Liriodendron tulipifera- Tulip Tree** Not to be confused with *Magnolia*, which is often erroneously called a tulip tree, this is the real deal. For those who want a large shade tree, this is one of the best. It will generally reach 60'-70' easily with a 30'-40' spread. The leaves are very easy to identify, looking like a tulip silhouette, and exhibiting bright yellow fall color. The flowers are yellow-green with an orange center, and have a striking resemblance to a tulip. Allow this tree to have ample water, as major drought can cause it to drop a lot of leaves in mid-late summer.

**Platanus acerifolia- London Planetree, Sycamore** One of the most pollution tolerant trees in the world, London Planetrees are widely planted as street trees, shade trees, or anywhere that a tough tree is needed. Their leaves are almost identical to that of the maples, and so it is often confused with the maples. The bark is an olive color, and flakes in plates to show a creamy color, which is very striking. Fall color will tend to be yellowish. A few notes: Anthracnose or powdery mildew can be a problem, especially in wet spots. 'Bloodgood' is reportedly anthracnose resistant, but any of these problems can be sprayed for if necessary. Also, to people with allergies or problems breathing, this may not be the best tree. The underside of the leaf naturally grows a white fuzzy substance on it, which tends to come off in the summer, creating dust-like debris, which can be irritating to some people.

**Quercus- Oak** Nothing is quite as stately as a mature oak tree. Their sheer size and strength is unsurpassed by any tree. A lot of people consider oaks to be slow growing, but this isn't necessarily the case. Oaks tend to be spindly in youth, but that is because they are developing a sturdy trunk and deep roots. Really, when compared side to side, oaks will hold their own in growth rate amongst most other trees, they just take a bit longer to get started. A few varieties include: *Q. coccinea* or **Scarlet Oak**, with excellent deep red fall color and a slightly pyramidal shape. *Q. palustris* or **Pin Oak** is probably the most popular, with a strong pyramidal shape, reddish fall color, and leaves that hang on the tree throughout winter even after browning. And *Q. rubra*, called the **Red Oak**, or **Northern Red Oak**, is also very popular, with a rounded mature habit much like our native white oak, easy transplanting ability, and deep red fall color. Most oaks will reach 50'± tall, and 40'± wide, with very mature trees reaching 70'+ in height.

**Tilia- Linden** (called a "Lime" tree in England) Simply a beautiful tree. This tree really has not gotten the attention in America that it deserves. It has bark that is light gray, almost silver in youth. The leaves are glossy, deep green, and rounded, taking on a yellow fall color. The form is very dense, uniform. All in all, it is a great tree, and tough too. A few selection we carry are *T. cordata* or **Littleleaf Linden** one of the most common, the original. *T. cordata* 'Greenspire' is an improved variety with a very strong growth habit and uniform appearance. *T. tomentosa* 'Sterling Silver' is a popular type, with a silvery underside to the leaves, giving it a bicolor appearance and great contrast. *T. tomentosa* 'Green Mountain' is very similar, but is slightly less pyramidal, and tends to have darker green leaves.

**Ulmus- Elm** Once the American Elm graced streets up and down the East coast, a beautiful, tough, stately native tree. One of the great horticultural tragedies of our time was the death of most of these trees due to the importation of Dutch Elm Disease. Portland still has several surviving specimens, but their future is questionable, and further planting is generally prohibited in urban areas to protect the existing trees. But, intensive breeding and testing has yielded at least two varieties of Elm, Athena and Allee, which are resistant to Dutch Elm disease. *Ulmus parviflora* 'Emer I', or **Athena® Elm**, is a broadly rounded form, with glossy leaves and yellow fall color. Its bark is patchy, showing an interesting mosaic of orange, tan, and gray. *Ulmus parviflora* 'Emer II', or **Allee® Elm** looks extremely similar to the old American Elms. Its shape is upright, arching, a vase shape. Other than that, its bark is the same mosaic as Athena, and its leaf shape and color are similar, but it occasionally gets some red fall color. These are both excellent and worthwhile trees.

**Zelkova serrata 'Village Green'** Zelkovas were once sold as one of the best replacement for the American Elm, because the two trees are similar in a few respects. Zelkovas are actually great trees in their own right, being tough, versatile, and attractive with age. The form tends to be very vase-like, and very uniform with age. The leaves are a dark green color, turning yellow in fall. 'Village green' is a much improved variety, as the species tends to be very funny looking in its youth, and Village green tends to shape up younger. Very popular as a street tree, Zelkovas will make a worthwhile addition to just about any yard.