

Recommended Trees for La Crosse County Urban Landscapes

Not every tree that would do well in the urban setting of La Crosse County is included on this list, and not every tree included in the list will be suitable for planting on any boulevard. Remember: the urban forest should be no more than 20% from the same family, no more than 10% from the same genus, and no more than 5% from the same species. Maples are excluded from the list because they are overplanted in urban areas of La Crosse County, and greater diversity is needed to help ensure a healthy, resilient urban forest.

Also note: while La Crosse County is located in USDA Hardiness Zone 4, several trees on this list are only hardy to Zone 5. As the La Crosse County climate continues to warm, some of the Zone 5 trees may become suitable for more widespread planting; however, under Wis. 94.10 it is illegal for nursery dealers/sellers to misrepresent a Zone 5 tree as being “Hardy” for this area.

Tall (>35') Deciduous Trees						
Botanical and Common Name, Plant Family	Hardi- ness Zone	Suitability for Boulevards	Description	Average Height, Width at Maturity	Growth Rate	Special Ecological Features
<i>Betula nigra</i> River Birch Birch Family	4	No	Prefers cool, moist, acidic soil in full sun, usually sold as a multi-trunk tree, rounded shape when mature; prefers cool climates.	Ht. 40' – 60' W. 30' – 50'	Fast	Birch seeds are eaten by many bird species; hummingbirds, squirrels, & insects drink the sap; provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds; brittle branches often break in high winds.
<i>Carya ovata</i> Hickory Walnut Family	4	No	Tall tree with oval crown, prefers humusy, rich soil in full sun or part shade; edible nuts.	Ht. 70' – 90' W. 50' – 70'	Slow	Provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds; provides food for small mammals.
<i>Catalpa speciosa</i> Northern Catalpa Trumpet Creeper Family (Bignoniaceae)	4	Possibly	Narrow growth, irregular crown, large heart-shaped leaves & white flowers late spring; long narrow pods in fall; brittle branches, rot resistant wood.	Ht. 40' – 70' W. 20' – 40'	Moderately fast	Provides shade, cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, often self-seeds. Caution: can be a messy tree.

Botanical and Common Name, Plant Family	Hardiness Zone	Suitability for Boulevards	Description	Average Height, Width at Maturity	Growth Rate	Special Ecological Features
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i> Hackberry Elm Family	3	Yes	Tough tree with corky, warty-looking bark; adaptable to most soils.	Ht. 50' – 70' W. 40' – 60'	Moderately fast	Native shade tree, provides nesting sites for birds, provides food for birds, mammals, & insects; over 18% of the trees in La Crosse are hackberry.
<i>Corylus colurna</i> Turkish Filbert Birch Family	4	Yes	Formal, pyramidal form, urban tolerant.	Ht. 40' – 50' W. 20' – 25'	Moderately fast	Shade tree, dark green foliage, may be difficult to find; may produce nuts.
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> Ginkgo	3	Yes	Native to China; easy to grow, few pests; only plant fruitless (male) varieties due to smelly fruit.	Ht. 50' – 80' W. 30' – 40'	Slow	Provides nesting sites for birds.
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis</i> Honeylocust (Thornless) Pea Family	4	Yes	Fine texture, spreading canopy provides filtered shade; tolerant of most soils, urban tolerant. Female plants produce pods.	Ht. 50' – 70' W. 40' – 50'	Fast	Native tree, provides nesting sites for birds, food for mammals and caterpillars; some varieties have bright yellow foliage in spring.
<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i> Kentucky Coffeetree Pea Family	4	Usually	Prefers average soil; oval canopy, seed pods in fall, tolerant of urban areas.	Ht. 50' – 75' W. 40' – 50'	Slow to moderate	Native tree, provides cover for wildlife, nest sites for birds, food for caterpillars; pods are toxic to humans.
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> Tulip Tree/Tulip Poplar Magnolia Family	4 - 5	No	Prefers organically-rich moist soils; yellow tulip-like flowers in spring; limbs easily broken in high winds.	Ht. 60' – 90' W. 30' – 50'	Fast	Provides nesting sites for birds.
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i> American Sycamore Platanaceae Family	4	Possibly	Prefers moist soil, full sun; smooth whitish bark with splotches of brown, grey, or green; 1" ball-shaped fruits.	Ht. 60' – 100' W. 40' – 60'	Moderately fast	Numerous bird species eat the fruit, along with beaver, muskrat, & squirrels. Provides nesting habitat and cover for wildlife.
<i>Quercus bicolor</i> Swamp White Oak Beech Family	4	Usually	Rounded canopy, prefers acidic soil, tolerates wide range of soils.	Ht. 50' – 60' W. 50' – 60'	Slow to moderate	Native tree, provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, pollen & nectar, and food for birds & mammals.

Botanical and Common Name, Plant Family	Hardiness Zone	Suitability for Boulevards	Description	Average Height, Width at Maturity	Growth Rate	Special Ecological Features
<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> Bur Oak Beech Family	3	Possibly	Pyramidal when young, develops a broad crown on a massive trunk at maturity; adaptable to most soils; may be too large for boulevard.	Ht. 70' – 80' W. 70' – 100'	Slow	Native tree, provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, pollen & nectar, and food for birds, mammals, and caterpillars.
<i>Tilia Americana</i> American Linden, Basswood Linden Family	3	Yes	Prefers deep, fertile soils but adaptable to most soils; fragrant yellow flowers in spring, nutlet in fall.	Ht. 60' – 80' W. 40' – 50'	Moderately fast	Native tree, provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, pollen & nectar, and food for birds, mammals, & caterpillars. Japanese beetle may be a problem.
<i>Tilia cordata</i> Littleleaf Linden Linden Family	3	Yes	Pyramidal when young, rounded with age; prefers fertile well-drained soil; fragrant yellow flowers in summer, small nutlet in fall; foliage smaller than American Linden.	Ht. 50' – 60' W. 35' – 50'	Moderately fast growing	Shade tree, provides cover for wildlife. Japanese beetle may be a problem.
<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> Silver Linden Linden Family	4	Yes	Pyramidal when young, oval with age; prefers deep, fertile soil, tolerates heat & drought better than other lindens; fragrant, light yellow flowers in summer.	Ht. 50' – 70' W. 30' – 40'	Moderately fast growing	Shade tree, provides cover for wildlife. Japanese beetle may be a problem.
<i>Ulmus hybrids</i> Dutch Elm Disease (DED) Hybrid Elms Elm Family	4; NOTE some are Z5	Yes	Vase shaped, glossy green leaves, adaptable to most soils, tolerant of compacted clay.	Depends on variety; 55' – 70' tall, 40' – 60' wide	Vigorous, fast-growing	Provides shade, cover for wildlife, food for caterpillars?
<i>Ulmus davidiana</i> Discovery Elm Elm Family	3	Yes	Vase-shaped, glossy dark green leaves, tolerant of compacted clay soils.	Ht. 35' – 40' W. 35' – 40'	Vigorous, fast-growing	Provides shade, cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, food for birds, mammals, and caterpillars.

<i>Zelkova serrata</i> Japanese Zelkova Elm Family	5	Possibly	Native to Eurasia; prefers average soil, full sun; vase-shaped crown; develops a peeling bark in old age.	Ht. 50' – 70' W. 50' – 80'	Moderately fast.	Provides nesting sites for birds.
Small (< 35') Deciduous Trees						
Botanical Name	Hardiness Zone	Suitability for Boulevards	Description	Height, Width at Maturity	Growth Rate	Special Ecological Functions
<i>Aesculus x carnea</i> 'Briotii' 'Ruby Red' Horsechestnut Horse-chestnut Family	4	Usually	Rounded tree. Large green leaves, red flowers clusters in late spring.	Ht. 25' – 30' W. 25' – 30'	Moderately fast	Unknown
<i>Amelanchier arborea</i> Serviceberry Tree Rose Family	4	Usually	Open canopy, masses of small white flowers in early spring, edible fruits in summer; prefers moist, well-drained soil; tolerates part shade.	Ht. 15' – 20' W. 10' – 20'	Moderately fast	Native tree, provides cover for wildlife, pollen & nectar, and food for over 19 species of birds! Not a long-lived tree (10-20 years).
<i>Cercis canadensis</i> Redbud – Northern Strain Pea Family	4; only buy trees labeled "Northern Strain", otherwise not reliably hardy.	Possibly	Prefers average, moisture retentive soil, full sun to part shade; stunning rose-purple flowers early spring, followed by large heart-shaped leaves; prone to several diseases.	Ht. 20' – 30' W. 15' – 20'	Moderate	
<i>Cornus alternifolia</i> Pagoda Dogwood Dogwood Family	3	No	Prefers part shade, acidic, moist soil; very horizontal branching, white flowers late spring.	Ht. 15' – 25' W. 20' – 30'	Moderate	Great native tree, berries eaten by many bird species!
<i>Cotinus obovatus</i> American Smoketree Anacardiaceae	5	Possibly	Prefers average soil, can be either treeform or large shrub; billowy features midsummer look like smoke.	Ht. 20' – 30' W. 20' – 30'	Moderate	

<i>Crataegus crusgalli var inermis</i> Thornless Cockspur Hawthorn Rose Family	4	No	Spreading, horizontal tree with white flowers in spring, followed by persistent red fruits; tolerates most soils but prefers evenly moist.	Ht. 12' – 15' W. 10' – 15'	Slow to moderate	Provides cover for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, pollen & nectar, food for more than 20 bird species; suckers (growth from base of tree) often have thorns.
<i>Maackia amurensis</i> Amur Maackia Pea Family	4	Yes	Small rounded tree with copper-colored bark, white flowers in early spring followed by small pods.	Ht. 20' – 25' W. 20' – 25'	Slow growth rate	
<i>Magnolia stellata</i> Magnolia Magnoliaceae	4	No	Native to Japan; prefers rich organic, well-drained soil; part sun, shelter from high winds; white flowers early spring;	Ht. 15' – 20' W. 10' – 15' Note: multiple trunk form may be much wider.	Moderate	
<i>Malus cultivars</i> Crabapples Rose Family	4	Yes; fruitless varieties preferred	Shapes vary from narrow, upright to rounded, to horizontal to weeping; prefers evenly moist, well-drained soil; pink, white, or red flowers in spring, fruit in summer.	Height & width varies depending on variety; generally Ht. 12' – 20' W. 10' – 20'	Moderate	Provides shelter & food for birds, food for mammals, except for fruitless varieties. Fruitless varieties best for boulevards.
<i>Ostrya virginiana</i> Ironwood/Hop Hornbeam Birch Family	3	Usually	Small understory tree, prefers part shade, rounded form, fruit resembles hops.	Ht. 25' – 30' W. 15' – 20'	Moderate	Provides shelter for wildlife, nesting sites for birds, food for birds.
<i>Prunus maackia</i> Amur Chokecherry Rose Family	3	No	Rounded tree, copper-colored bark, white flowers in spring, black fruits in summer	Ht. 25' – 30' W. 15' – 20'	Moderate	Provides food for birds, mammals
<i>Syringa reticulata</i> Japanese Tree Lilac Olive Family	3	Yes	Pyramidal-shaped tree, large white flower clusters in early summer, prefers moist, well-drained soil	Ht. 20' – 25' W. 12' – 20'	Moderate	Becoming overplanted, often used as a boulevard tree but may be better suited to non-boulevard uses. CAUTION: Ash (<i>Fraxinus</i>) is in the Olive Family too!

Sources:

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