

When reviewing the tree list two factors should be kept in mind. One is a scientific biological/climatological Scientific factor, and the other is a "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" factor

SCIENTIFIC FACTOR

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has prepared a map showing the average low winter temperature for areas of all states, including Wisconsin. This was last updated in 2012 based on more accurate information from more weather monitoring stations and better geographic information system (GIS) position locating ability. Zone 4b has average annual extreme minimum temperatures of -25 to -30 degrees Fahrenheit. The next warmest zone, 5a, is in mid Crawford County, north of Prairie du Chien. These average minimum temperatures are -20 to -25 degrees.

Some of the trees on the recommended street tree list are trees that either have a native range in zone 5, or have a record of successful ornamental use in zone 5.

Our overall average annual temperature is getting warmer, especially most noticeable with higher average minimum temperatures, and the most recent 2012 hardiness zone designation reflects that reality. Zone 5 has moved at least 50 miles farther north from its previous boundary designation in the 1990s. As the climate continues to exhibit warmer minimum winter temperatures some trees that are grown in zone 5 will be able to handle the warmer winters as "zone 5 like" climate extends northward. In another 25 years, 2040, what will La Crosse area climate be like? Will some of these more southerly trees be part of our urban tree cover? Maybe we should begin planning for the future now by getting some of these "warm weather" trees in the ground now to at least begin testing them. A colder winter now and then or "return to the old days", may nip the buds of the "warm weather wimps", but having them already underway will greatly increase our pallet of available trees.

Beauty in eye of the beholder Factor

Trees are living things. That is important to consider. When our grandkids were little my wife used to read them a book, "Everything Poops". This little scatological bit of reality reminds us that trees also have little bits and pieces that grow and then fall off them. Leaves are obvious droppings, usually in the fall; but some trees also have fruit or seeds that fall in the appropriate season for that species...sometimes in the spring and sometimes in summer or fall. Some trees drop pieces of bark, or twigs or entire branches...some trees have thorns, or very large and thick leaves that seem like roof shingles...some trees even have odors in their flowers or fruit that may not please everyone. And then there is the pollen...and different people are allergic to different types of pollen! Some people find any or all of these droppings, detritus, and debris to be endearing qualities of the natural world and part of the beauty of trees; just as we accept our own warts and blemishes as part of life. Other people find these qualities of trees to be "messy" or sufficient cause to reject certain types of trees from ever being planted anywhere they may travel, let alone their own front door.

Some trees have characteristics we may love, such as beautiful blossoms in the spring, or brilliant leaves in the fall, but then those same trees may drop rotting fruit or large seed pods on well-manicured lawns. All these factors must be considered and given the importance each person may ascribe to it.