

# Which Tree?

## Purpose of The Tree

Shade in summer

Shade in winter

Flowers

Fall Color

Architectural Accent

Social Custom...every house needs a tree!

There is no perfect tree

### **Native vs. Non-Native**

There is debate among landscapers and well-meaning environmentalists about planting only "native" species vs. "non-native" or "exotic" species. Arguments can be made that much of the disturbed area where we plant in cities is no longer "native". The soil has been so modified and disturbed and the buildings themselves create micro-climates that there are "exotic" plants from elsewhere in the continent or world that are better suited for the site. The definition of native or non-native also varies. Some plants that are "native" to Wisconsin are not necessarily "holy and just" to plant in La Crosse area because they are "native". Balsam fir for example does not do well in the heat and humidity of the La Crosse area, its native credentials are about 200 miles to the north, and Black Locust, a tree native to the US Ozark Mountain area, is an invasive spreading pest in Wisconsin. Another "native" tree, If you are considering the North American continent as "native", is the Colorado Blue Spruce. This tree is prone to serious needle fungus in the Midwest.

A lot depends whether you are planting trees, shrubs, perennial plants, or annual plants. By native do we mean only those plants that are growing in a "wild" situation within say 50 miles of the subject site at this time. Remember many plants we think of as native or common wild plants are actually exotic imports, such as wild carrot (Queen Anne's Lace) or Tansy in terms of wild flowers, Exotic trees have not generally escaped from cultivation into the wild although the various forms of Norway maple are always threatening to do so, and may be a problem of escape in localized woodlots. If you are planting a pollinator garden of native prairie and woodland flowering plants, as many of us are now days, be aware that many floristic variants of these native plants, sold by garden centers, that have "bigger" or "multicolored" or some other bloom modification are designed to catch the person, not the butterfly. The beginning of the scientific name may be that of the useful native plant, but the greenhouse-bred modified flower may in fact not be the right shape, or depth, or color, or pollen content to best serve the critter we are trying to attract. So yes, I am aware of native vs.

non-native, and I quite knowingly realize some of the trees I will recommend are native to the more southerly parts of the Midwest or in a few cases, not even native to North America, but those are non-invasive.

### **Trees are good:**

Properly placed and proper species Increase property value for resale  
Trees cast shade in summer and reduce cooling cost of air conditioning  
Trees can make air smell "fresher" in summer  
Trees add beauty with spring/summer flowers, fall leaf color, interesting bark and form in all seasons  
Trees can reduce the area you feel you "must" maintain as a lawn  
Trees are interesting space fillers and objects of discussion and beauty

### **Trees are bad:**

Trees are big and tall and can fall on cars and buildings!  
Trees require maintenance  
Trees drop leaves and fruit and other biological debris on lawns, roofs, gutters, Cars, and sidewalks  
Trees cast shade and prevent lawn growth  
Tree roots protrude above ground and make it difficult to mow the lawn  
My tree doesn't have pretty blossoms, or leaves, or fruit  
My tree stinks...literally

There's an old rule in real estate..."location, location. Location". The same rule applies in placing a tree...we can't control what happened with old trees, but new trees we can control their location on the property.

The "cute" tree (blue spruce) in the little pot planted next to the driveway becomes "TreeZilla" when it gets older. **Big Trees Can Not be Made Little, and still actually have a healthy, nicely shaped, living tree!!!**

Some trees are not compatible if you also want a lawn...they DO cast dense shade...they DO have low limbs as part of their natural form (and look funny if you "raise the crown"), some trees DO have shallow roots that stick up above the surface, some trees DO have fruiting bodies that are large and can disrupt a neatly maintained lawn, some trees DO shed branches and woody debris rather profusely.

So, what's a person to do?

Here is a look at different characteristics of trees and SOME of the trees that might be used to fulfill that need. **Note there are NO maples, ashes, or Colorado Blue Spruce in this list because these species have severe insect, disease, or just plain extreme overplanting that most arborists agree we should not plant**

anymore...(some insect resistant ash are being developed...recommendations may change in the future).

### Tall Trees for Shade

Oak (white, swamp white, or bur)  
Linden also called Basswood  
Buckeye  
Filbert  
Catalpa

### Tall Trees with less Dense Shade

Honeylocust  
Walnut  
Kentucky Coffeetree

### Trees With Interesting Fall Color

Buckeye Dogwood  
Honeylocust  
Some oaks

### Trees with interesting or remarkable fruit

Walnut Kentucky Coffeetree  
Linden Catalpa  
Honeylocust Ironwood

### Large Trees With Significant Flowers

Linden/Basswood Tuliptree  
Catalpa  
Yellowwood

### Small Trees With Significant Flowers

Crabapple Serviceberry  
Hawthorn Magnolia  
Lilac

### Conifer Trees

White Pine  
Red Pine  
White Fir  
Bald Cypress (loses needles in winter)  
Tamarack (loses needles in winter)  
Arborvitae

### Trees with Interesting Bark

Hackberry Filbert  
Birch (White or River)  
Redbud Honeylocust  
Shagbark Hickory  
Muscle wood

### Trees Susceptible to Black Walnut Toxicity

Birch White Pine  
Apple Norway Spruce  
Crabapple Scots Pine  
Linden/basswood Yew

### Trees Tolerant of Road Salt

Serviceberry Ginkgo  
River Birch Honeylocust  
Hickory Coffeetree  
Catalpa Walnut  
White Oaks Lilac  
Elm Arborvitae

### Trees Tolerant of Dry Soils

Shagbark Hickory  
Catalpa **Honeylocust**  
Hackberry **Coffeetree**  
Filbert Most Oaks  
**Ginkgo** Lilac  
**Elm**

### Trees Tolerant of Wet Soils

Buckeye **Honeylocust**  
Serviceberry **Coffeetree**  
River Birch **Ginkgo**  
Musclewood White Oaks  
Hackberry Linden  
Some Hawthorns **Elm**