

SELECTING TREES FOR YOUR URBAN AND COMMUNITY FOREST



Advice and ideas for small, medium, and large trees in your community

Trees and Community Character

Trees say so much about the character of a community. The choices we make in selecting trees for public landscapes and streetscapes will determine the nuances of that character. Appropriate tree choices can also minimize future maintenance needs and increase the likelihood that trees will reach their mature potential.

Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place!

This is the most important concept to understand whenever you are considering planting trees. Every tree has certain needs and characteristics (mature size, growth habit, light requirements, soil needs, etc.), and every planting site has characteristics (growing space, obstructions, soils, light patterns, topography, etc.). Before planting any tree, you should do your best to make sure the tree is compatible with the site. Consider the size of the tree at maturity. “Tougher” trees should be matched to less hospitable sites. Large, native, and less abundant species should be used to diversify the urban forest. Trees native to Massachusetts provide benefits to insects and wildlife that non-native trees may not. They also provide a sense of place. Plant native trees when and where possible, but always consider site characteristics and species diversity. For example, red maple is native but is overplanted in many communities. Consider other species if it is overused in your community. Visit a local arboretum to see a variety of trees at their mature sizes. You should also visit your local nursery and hand-pick the best trees for your community.

Get to Know the Nuances of Your Community Forest

Get to know how trees grow in your community by observing them over different seasons. Make note of attractive mature specimens thriving in town or nearby. Communities should consider developing their own list of recommended streetscape trees based on the needs and character of the community, the existing environmental conditions, and the capacity for maintenance. A tree inventory or survey can help you identify what currently exists in your community forest and help guide species selection.

Use the species list on this factsheet as a starting point. Consult the references listed, or others, to find out more about the trees. Finally, browse local nursery catalogs to determine availability and visit them early to find the very best tree for your community.



Warwick

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Dirr, Michael and Keith Warren.
The Tree Book: Superior Selections or Landscapes, Streetscapes, and Gardens. Timber Press, 2019.

UConn Plant Database,
www.hort.uconn.edu/plants/.

i-Tree Species,
<https://spespecies.itreetools.org/>.

Bureau of Forestry

Urban & Community
Forestry Program

Massachusetts Department of
Conservation and Recreation

251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114

www.mass.gov/dcr/ucf



In Partnership with the
Massachusetts Tree
Wardens' & Foresters'
Association, this factsheet
series is funded in part by
a grant from the USDA
Forest Service.

The Massachusetts Department of
Conservation and Recreation prohibits
discrimination in employment on the basis
of race, color, creed, religion, national origin,
ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expres-
sion, age, sexual orientation, Vietnam Era
Veteran status, or disability.

Some Suggested Trees for Massachusetts



Large Trees:

Consider these only in areas with adequate rooting space and without any overhead wires or other obstructions.

- **Red maple** *Acer rubrum*
- **Sugar maple** *Acer saccharum*
- Red horsechestnut**
Aesculus x carnea
- **River birch** *Betula nigra*
- **Hackberry** *Celtis occidentalis*
- Katsura** *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*
- Turkish filbert** *Corylus colurna*
- ⊗■ **Ginkgo (male only)**
Ginkgo biloba
- ⊗■● **Honeylocust** *Gleditsia triacanthos*
var. inermis (thornless)
- ⊗● **Kentucky Coffeetree**
Gymnocladus dioica
- ⊗● **Sweetgum**
Liquidambar styraciflua
- **Tulip tree** *Liriodendron tulipifera*
- ⊗● **Cucumbertree** *Magnolia acuminata*
- Dawn redwood**
Metasequoia glyptostroboides
- **Black gum** *Nyssa sylvatica*
- London planetree**
Plantanus x acerifolia
- **Swamp white oak**
Quercus bicolor
- **Scarlet oak** *Quercus coccinea*
- **Pin oak** *Quercus palustris*
- **Red oak** *Quercus rubra*
- English oak** *Quercus robur*
- **Japanese pagoda tree**
Styphnolobium japonicum
- Korean mountain ash**
Sorbus alnifolia
- ▶ **Bald cypress** *Taxodium distichum*
- **Basswood** *Tilia americana*
- Silver linden** *Tilia tomentosa*
- **Little-leaf linden** *Tilia cordata*
- American elm** *Ulmus americana*
- **American elm & hybrid**
elm cultivars

KEY:

- ⊗ Fruitless cultivars available
- ▶ Short longevity
- Native to Massachusetts
- Hardy in stressed sites
- Native to eastern U.S. (though not MA)

Medium Trees:

Plant near power lines or other obstructions WITH CAUTION

- Amur maackia** *Maackia amurensis*
- **American hornbeam**
Carpinus caroliniana
- **Yellowwood** *Cladastris kentuckea (syn. C. lutea)*
- **American hophornbeam**
Ostrya virginiana
- Accolade cherry**
Prunus sargentii 'Accolade'
- Sargent cherry** *Prunus sargentii*
- ▶ **Kwanzan cherry**
Prunus serrulata 'Kwanzan'
- ▶ **Higan cherry** *Prunus subhirtella*

Park Trees:

For areas with ample space away from pedestrian and motorized traffic

- ⊗ **Paperbark maple** *Acer griseum*
- ⊗ **Horsechestnut**
Aesculus hippocastanum
- **Shagbark hickory** *Carya ovata*
- Chinese chestnut** *Castanea mollissima*
- **American beech** *Fagus grandifolia*
- **Carolina silverbell**
Halesia tetraptera (syn. H. carolina)
- **Butternut** *Juglans cinerea*
- **Black walnut** *Juglans nigra*
- **Eastern white pine** *Pinus strobus*
- Japanese black pine** *Pinus thunbergii*
- **American sycamore**
Platanus occidentalis
- **White oak** *Quercus alba*
- **Bur oak** *Quercus macrocarpa*
- Japanese stewartia**
Stewartia pseudocamellia

Small Trees:

Appropriate for planting near power lines or in small spaces

- **Hedge maple** *Acer campestre*
- **Serviceberry** *Amelanchier sp.*
- ⊗ **Eastern redbud** *Cercis canadensis*
- Kousa dogwood** *Cornus kousa*
- Cornelian cherry** *Cornus mas*
- **Washington hawthorn**
Crataegus phaenopyrum
- ⊗■ **Crabapple** *Malus sp.*
- **Sweet bay magnolia**
Magnolia virginiana
- **Canada Red Select Chokecherry**
Prunus virginiana 'Schubert'

Invasive Trees

(DO NOT PLANT)

Illegal to import, propagate, or sell in Massachusetts. (Authorized under General Laws Chapter 128)

- Norway maple** *Acer platanoides*
- Sycamore maple**
Acer pseudoplatanus
- Tree of heaven** *Ailanthus altissima*
- Amur corktree**
Phellodendron amurense
- Black locust** *Robinia pseudoacacia*

Trees that have shown invasive tendencies: Plant with caution. Not recommended for planting where they may spread into natural areas

- Amur maple** *Acer ginnala*
- Goldenraintree**
Koelreuteria paniculata
- **Japanese tree lilac**
Syringa reticulata