



Recommended Tree Planting List

This is by no means an exhaustive list. The following selection is a list of trees that seem to work well in tough urban conditions and should also be tolerant of the many stressors our trees will face in the coming decades. Availability also plays a big role in tree selection, all trees on this list should be available from local nurseries in generally larger sizes (1.5" caliper and up) unless otherwise noted.

I am always happy to hear feedback on the contents of this list.
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Small:

Acer circinatum - Vine Maple

Small growing native deciduous multi-stemmed tree. 20' Mature height. A beautiful, small growing native tree tolerant of a broad range of conditions. Great yellow fall color.

<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/30>

Acer griesum - Paperbark maple

Very low maintenance deciduous tree with beautiful bark bringing interest year round. 30' Mature height. Full sun to deep shade. Slow growing, with a relative short maximum height.

<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/35>

Acer japonicum 'Aconitifolium' - Fernleaf Full Moon Maple

Small tree with beautiful foliage and spectacular fall color, fun alternative to Japanese maple. 15' Mature height. Watering needed in sandy soils.

<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/36>

Acer palmatum 'Shishigashira' - Lion's Head Japanese Maple

Small upright ornamental tree with incredibly unique foliage and branching structure. 15' Mature height.

<http://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/48>

Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Gracilis' - Hinoki Cypress

A great little evergreen tree. Very slow growing and requires little pruning. Just a little bit of thinning regularly keeps these trees looking great. Nice tree for small spaces

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/346>



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Cornus Kousa - Chinese dogwood

Small growing tree with long lasting spring flower display.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/415>

Magnolia stellata - Star magnolia

Low maintenance magnolia with a beautiful spring flower display. 20' tall mature height. Full sun to light or open shade.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/965>

Malus transitoria 'Schmidtcutleaf' - Golden Raindrops Cutleaf Crabapple

Beautiful little tree with an enormous fruit crop that brings nice color to an otherwise dreary early winter landscape. This tree has it all, beautiful flowers, beautiful fruit, interesting leaves, and great disease resistance.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/984>

Stewartia pseudocamellia - Japanese Stewartia

Beautiful small tree with a spring flower display, the bark and branching structure are probably its most beautiful trait though. Looks great year round.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1513>



Medium:

Carpinus caroliniana - American Hornbeam

This is a very tough and adaptable urban tree. It does well on its own in the sun or can also be planted in a shady understory. It wants to get wide so ample space is needed. The gorgeous leaves and beautiful smooth bark are the most beautiful characteristics.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/298>

Cercidiphyllum japonicum - Katsura

Medium sized tree. Elegant branching structure, beautiful bark and leaves. Sometimes overused in the landscape, but that is because it is very tough hearty and beautiful.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/331>

Cladrastis kentukea - Yellowwood

Nice spring flowers, beautiful bark, and bright fall color make this a showy tree. Mature height of 30-50' can get as wide as it is tall so it needs some space or corrective pruning in smaller spaces.

<https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-plant-descriptions/yellowwood>

Ginkgo biloba 'Autumn Gold' - Ginkgo

Of the many ginkgo varieties this one has some of the best fall color (of any tree in the region). It is very hearty and tolerant of tough urban conditions. The unique shape and form of the leaves is captivating. There are also columnar varieties available if space is more limited (see columnar trees below). Bring home a living fossil dating back 270 million years!

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/715>

Gymnocladus dioica 'Espresso-JFS'- Espresso Kentucky Coffee Tree

This is a great street tree selection. Tolerant of tough urban conditions, it has beautiful compound leaves. Nice yellow foliage in the fall.

<http://www.boldspring.com/trees/gde-std>

Oxydendrum arboreum - Sourwood

Slow growing tree which matures at about 25' tall. Beautiful late summer flower display followed by spectacular foliage. Very hearty and tolerant of difficult urban conditions. Prefers full sun to dappled shade, foliage display is best in full sun.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1072>



Pinus contorta - Shore Pine

A hearty native pine that tolerates a wide range of conditions and is very drought tolerant. Slow growing with a maximum height of about 50' after many decades. Brings beauty year round with interesting bark and a twisty sometimes leaning form. A very distinctive pine. Generally only available in smaller sizes (5 gallon max).

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1184>

Parrotia persica - Persian Ironwood

A deciduous, upright multi-stemmed tree with beautiful bark and a spectacular silhouette. Drought tolerant once established. Several different varieties available, some with slower growth than others.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1090>

Prunus serrulata 'Royal Burgundy' - Royal Burgundy Cherry

This cherry variety has beautiful purple leaves and does better in the PNW than most other cherries. It also lacks the aggressive root system present on many other cherries, the cause of much hardscape damage. The pink spring flowers bring a real early season appeal to the tree.

<http://www.urbanforestnursery.com/treeprofiles/profileroyalburgundycherry.html>

Styrax japonicus - Japanese snowbell tree

25' mature height. Beautiful foliage and bark, great spring drooping white spring flower display. Beautiful branching structure and bark keep interest through the winter.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1811>

Sorbus americana 'dwarfcrown' - Red cascade mountain ash

20' tall mature height. Hearty tree with beautiful compound leaves and smooth red bark which keeps interest all year round. The bright red berries bring beauty and birds in the fall. Does well in situations where planting aftercare is limited or unavailable.

<http://www.urbanforestnursery.com/treeprofiles/profileredcascademountainash.html>

Taxodium distichum - Bald Cypress

An interesting deciduous conifer. It is very tolerant of wet sites as its native range includes many southern swamps. Foliage turns a beautiful yellow/red in the fall.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1540>



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Columnar:

Fagus Sylvatica 'Daywick' - Columnar European Beech

Beautiful bark, branches, and leaves bring a lot to the table in this columnar version of the stately European beech. Tolerant of many soil types, best not planted next to hardscape or in small tree wells as the roots can cause damage. This is a beautiful tree that is great for tight spaces.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1752>

Ginkgo biloba 'Fastigiata' - Columnar Ginkgo

All the same traits as the other ginkgos, beautiful leaves and fall color, tolerance of pollution and tough urban soils, but in a narrow, upright form.

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=257112>

Quercus palustris 'Green Pillar' - Green Pillar Oak

Hearty columnar oak with great foliage density. Holds senescent leaves through most of the winter dormancy to provide great screening year round. Maximum likely size is 45' tall by 15' wide.

<http://www.urbanforestnursery.com/treeprofiles/profilegreenpillarpinoak.html>



Large:

Acer macrophyllum - Bigleaf Maple

This tree has gotten a bad wrap because so many large older trees are in decline. Now we humans are largely responsible for that. This is one of our iconic native deciduous trees and I think there are still plenty of places where it can work well. It needs lots of space to mature. Support the natives!

https://plants.usda.gov/plantguide/pdf/pg_acma3.pdf

Gary Oak - *Quercus garryana*

A beautiful spreading native oak tree. Needs well drained soil but is drought tolerant once established. Slow growing, but can get large if given enough time. Holds on to dead leaves through the winter, dropping them before new leaves emerge in the spring.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1268>

Metasequoia glyptostroboides - Dawn Redwood

A tall and skinny deciduous conifer, trunk and branches are much more slender than its native cousin, coast redwood. Grows fast and tall but stays relatively narrow with a beautiful silhouette. One of the few conifers that loses its foliage in the winter, which will let more light in during the dark months. Another living fossil!

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/993>

Platanus acerifolia 'Morton Circle' - London Planetree

This variety of the iconic street tree is resistant to anthracnose, a common issue for the species. These trees have proved themselves to be hearty and large growing street trees for over a century. Just take a trip to Seattle center and look around. They are incredibly stable for a large growing tree and failures are quite rare.

<https://www.mortonarb.org/trees-plants/tree-plant-descriptions/london-planetree>

Pseudotsuga menziesii - Douglas Fir

This is our most iconic tree, need I say more? It can get very tall but will generally stay relatively narrow, especially when encouraged to do so through pruning. There are some tight spaces where it can work well as long as there is plenty of space above. We have found that smaller seedlings generally transplant better than larger trees.

https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_psme.pdf



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Quercus phellos - Willow Oak

Don't let the willow-like leaves fool you; this is a big and stately oak. This tree is extremely tough and tolerant of difficult urban conditions. Also doubt tolerant once established. This tree needs lots of room to spread out, both vertically and horizontally. It is a great candidate for a stately shade tree or better yet a tree house tree!

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1275>

Quercus coccinea - Scarlet Oak

This tree brings beautiful fall color along with a hearty tolerance of tough urban conditions. With pruning it can be encouraged to stay a little more narrow than some other oaks, but you still need space for a large spreading tree.

<https://www.greatplantpicks.org/plantlists/view/1915>

Ulmus americana 'Princeton' - American Elm

Bring back the elms! This elm is resistant to dutch elm that wiped millions of elms in the late 20th century. It is drought tolerant and will make a great spreading shade tree. Give it plenty of space to spread out.

<http://www.http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=254119.com/treeprofiles/profileemeraldsunshineelm.html>