

Fast Growing Tree Selection Guide

Common Name/Botanical Name	Height/Spread	Good Fall Color	Unusual/Showy Fruit	Distinctive Bark	Tolerates Wet Soils	Tolerates Dry Soils	Use in Zone
<i>(Tolerates wide range of sites and/or possesses outstanding features.)</i>							
Very Desirable							
Bald Cypress/ <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	60-100'/40-50'	X	X	X	X	X	6,7,8
Japanese Zelkova/ <i>Zelkova serrata</i>	60-80'/30-40'			X		X	6,7,8
Lacebark Elm/ <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	40-60'/30-40'			X		X	6,7,8
Red Maple/ <i>Acer rubrum</i>	40-60'/25-40'	X		X	X		6,7,8
River Birch/ <i>Betula nigra</i>	50-60'/40-50'			X	X		6,7,8
Sawtooth Oak/ <i>Quercus acutissima</i>	50-60'/30-60'					X	6,7,8
Tulip Tree/ <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> *	80-100'/30-40'	X	X		X		6,7,8
Willow Oak/ <i>Quercus phellos</i>	40-60'/30-60'				X		6,7,8
Good							
<i>(Best on good sites; might possess undesirable traits or pest problems.)</i>							
Goldenrain Tree/ <i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	20-30'/10-15'			X			6,7,8
Green Ash/ <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	60-80'/40-50'			X	X		6,7,8
Loblolly Pine/ <i>Pinus taeda</i>	90-100'/20-40'			X	X		7,8
Sweet Gum/ <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	80-100'/40-50'	X		X	X		6,7,8
Sycamore/ <i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	80-100'/40-50'			X	X		6,7,8
Thornless Honeylocust/ <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	60-80'/30-50'				X	X	6,7,8
Water Oak/ <i>Quercus nigra</i>	60-100'/50-60'				X		6,7,8
Weeping Willow/ <i>Salix babylonica</i>	30-40'/20-30'				X		6,7,8
White Ash/ <i>Fraxinus americana</i>	75-100'/60-80'	X					6,7
Not Recommended							
<i>(Possesses undesirable traits and/or pest problems.)</i>							
Boxelder/ <i>Acer negundo</i>	50-75'/40-50'				X		6,7,8
Bradford Pear/ <i>Pyrus calleryana</i> 'Bradford'	0-50'/ 25-35'	X				X	6,7,8
Chinaberry/ <i>Melia azedarach</i>	30-40'/25-35'					X	6,7,8
Chinese Tallow Tree/ <i>Sapium sebiferum</i>	30-40'/20-30'	X	X			X	8
Empress Tree/ <i>Palowinia tomentosa</i> *	30-50'/20-30'					X	6,7,8
Mimosal/ <i>Albizia julibrissin</i>	30-35'/30-35'					X	6,7,8
Siberian Elm/ <i>Ulmus pumila</i>	30-60'/20-40'					X	6,7,8

* Tulip tree has attractive flowers, but has problems with litter and limb breakage. Bradford pear has attractive flowers, but has problems with limb breakage. Chinese tallow tree and the goldenrain tree have attractive flowers. Sweet gum has litter problems.

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Fast Growing Shade Trees

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Shade trees are versatile parts of our landscapes. In addition to the obvious use of a shade tree—to provide relief from the summer sun—properly placed trees can channel summer breezes to desired locations; add beauty to the landscape by offering a wide range of forms, textures and colors; help define outdoor space; frame views; add substantially to the value of our homes; and even affect our moods.

When the homeowner selects a tree, fast growth is a primary concern. The reason is obvious: The homeowner doesn't want to wait 15 to 20 years to enjoy the benefits. The faster the tree grows, the better. This criteria usually dominates the selection of trees for the home landscape.

Many trees are advertised as “fast growing.” Some are good selections; many others are not. What starts as satisfying—seeing rapid growth—can later become bitterly disappointing as problems reveal themselves. The tree is now many years old and quite large, leaving the homeowner with a maintenance problem and thoughts of replacement. The following information will assist the homeowner in making informed decisions when selecting fast growing trees.

Site Analysis

Every tree species has environmental conditions for optimum growth and every planting site has an environment to offer. The more closely the site meets the plant's requirements, the faster the plant becomes established and grows. The above-ground environment that influences tree performance includes seasonal extremes in temperature, humidity, sunlight (exposure), precipitation and adverse weather conditions. Below-ground factors include soil texture, structure and fertility, moisture extremes and underground obstacles to root growth. In addition, manmade obstructions, such as utility lines, rights-of-way and legal restrictions, should be investigated. Soil testing and a thorough visual examination of the site will aid in plant selection and help avoid future problems. Your county Extension office can assist you with your soil analysis and provide additional information.

Placement

Fast growing trees can be divided into two categories: long-lived, to be used as permanent shade trees; and fairly short-lived, to be used only as tempo-

rary shade trees. For both categories, select locations with care so permanent trees won't outgrow their locations and temporary trees won't interfere with slower growing, more permanent trees.

Many fast growing trees have aggressive root systems with heavily developed systems of surface roots. Consequently, do not plant them near septic tank drain lines or sewer lines. Place these trees well away from overhead obstructions, including power lines.

Space large shade trees one-half the distance of their spread (see chart) from any structure or overhead obstruction and the full width of the mature tree from the trunk of any other large growing tree. For smaller trees, allow at least half the mature spread of the existing tree plus half the spread of the proposed tree.

Concentrate shade trees on the western and southern sides of the building or area where additional shading is desired. However, do not neglect the southeastern exposure. During midsummer it can get hot early in the day, so provide some shade on this side of buildings, especially residences.

Depending on the ultimate size and arrangement, trees can provide shade for the entire house or for smaller areas such as a patio or deck. Shade density is also important. Dense shade from trees such as the tulip tree gives the maximum reduction in the sun's intensity and should be used to shade homes. Others, such as honey locust or bald cypress, provide the lightly filtered sunlight that plants such as camellias and azaleas need to perform best.

Culture

Thorough soil preparation enhances good plant growth. A large planting hole several times the size of the root ball and with well-worked backfill soil will produce satisfactory results. Organic soil amendments placed in the planting hole will not produce a superior tree. Research indicates that the best use of organic materials such as ground pine bark is as a mulch. Amending an entire bed with organic material can be beneficial.

Shade trees are usually bought balled and burlapped (B & B), container-grown or bare-root. Plant B & B trees in late fall, winter or early spring; container-grown trees, year round; and bare-root trees in the winter and early spring. When selecting a B & B tree, make sure the root ball has not been broken. When

buying container-grown trees, check to see if the root system is pot bound (roots circling the container excessively). If so, disturb the root ball just prior to planting or do not buy the tree. Check the root systems of bare-root trees and reject those with roots that have been allowed to dry, or where there is an inadequate root system. Keep all types of trees (especially bare-root) moist at all times prior to planting.

There are several important steps in the planting procedure. Plant at the proper depth, avoid excessive packing of the fill-soil, construct a water basin to hold water initially, water the tree in after planting, and mulch with 2 to 3 inches of an organic material such as pine bark or pine straw.

Trees should receive 2 tablespoons of a 12 percent to 16 percent nitrogen fertilizer (12-4-8 or 16-4-8) per each 10 square feet of root area. Apply in March and July during the first season. Do not apply large amounts of fertilizer until the trees are established, usually after the first year. After broadcasting the fertilizer evenly over the soil, water it in. In subsequent years, the results of a soil sample taken in late winter will dictate the next year's fertility program.

Plant Hardiness Zones

