

Finding the Right Tree for the Right Place

Right about now, most Ohioans are pining for green. As unbelievable as it sounds, most of us would rather be mowing than facing several more weeks of winter. So it's not unusual that our thoughts turn to spring.

If replacing or planting trees is on your agenda this year, there are many ways to make your efforts more successful and avoid pitfalls that can cause problems.

For instance, when choosing new trees, consider their purpose. Are you searching for trees to plant beneath utility wires? Eager to start a backyard orchard to grow your own fruit? Hunting trees known for their fall foliage?

Fall color is one of the greatest pleasures of Ohio's seasons. Several varieties of trees planted side-by-side can create a splendid show. Large groupings of the same kind of tree can make one large color statement. Sugar maples turn brilliant orange. Some oaks give beautiful reds, while witch hazel and Autumn Applause ash trees provide golden hues and purples.

Smaller trees that mature at heights below 25 feet are recommended if you're contending with cable TV, telephone, and electrical wires. Some choices include

- Flowering Crabapples (*Malus* species 10-25 feet)
- Nannyberry Viburnum (*Viburnum lentago* 20-25 feet)
- Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum* 25 feet)
- Chinese Dogwood (*Cornus kousa* 25 feet)

The desire for increased shade is another popular reason for planting trees. While many trees perform this function, each species has its own distinguishing characteristics. Norway maple, for example, has a rounded overall shape with dark green leaves and dense foliage. It grows to about 50 feet in height and width.

Honeylocust have small leaflets, making for a light, airy appearance. Urban foresters often plant honeylocusts in cities because of their high tolerance to the soil and temperature extremes found in urban areas.

Speaking of city living, dense spruce trees do a good job of hiding unsightly views and blocking out noise. To create a proper landscape screen consider whether you need tall, short, narrow, or wide plants. Narrow, upright trees work well in tight spaces like those between townhouses or the driveway and your property line. Tall evergreens with wide circumferences may be appropriate for wider spaces. Straight rows work well in narrow areas, but a serpentine arrangement seems more natural looking. A double row usually screens better than a single row.

Don't let snow or sleet deter you from making a landscape statement. By combining different evergreens and berry-bearing trees with varying bark color and textures, it's possible to create visual excitement even on a stark winter day. Try the yellow or red-stemmed dogwood for interesting twig hues. Winged euonymus and Paper Bark Maple trees produce very unusual bark and can add visual interest all year long.

Even oddly shaped plants contribute to our landscapes. For example, a Walking Stick is a large shrub or small tree that grows every which way but up. Its twists and turns catch the

eye and cause intriguing shadow play. Consider a weeping spruce or juniper or even an espaliered evergreen that can be trained to grow up walls.

Another parameter to keep in mind is the location of your new trees. Moist, wet sites may require different trees than dry sites. Some trees are more tolerant of shade or sun than others. Wind exposure is also a factor. Deicing salts and car exhausts can also cause problems. It's important to understand all the stresses trees are subject to and how well different trees tolerate these stresses. Also be sure to position your new tree so that you don't end up with a root system that will interfere with sewer, gas, and water lines or damage your sidewalks or pavement several years down the road.

One last tip: the United States Department of Agriculture divides the United States into what are known as "Hardiness Zones." Since Ohio falls into Zones 5 and 6, look for trees suitable for these areas since they can normally withstand temperature extremes. (For more information about Hardiness Zones, visit The National Arbor Day Foundation website: www.arborday.org/trees/whatzone.html.)

Cross referencing both the function and location of your new tree will help you narrow your choices and determine what will be the right tree for the right place.