

Recommended Landscape Trees for Metropolitan Kansas City

This brochure is meant to be a starting point for the tree selection process. To begin, you first need to ask yourself a series of questions.

Location

Where will the tree be planted? What is the sun/shade situation? Is the area wet or dry? Is the location windy or sheltered? Will it be in a container?

Shape

Are you looking for columnar, rounded, weeping, vase shaped, spreading or pyramidal?

Expectations

Do you want a tree that blooms, a shade tree, or a tree with great fall color?

Size

What is the space available for the mature height and width of the tree?

Future care

What are the future water and pruning requirements?

After you have answered the above questions you are ready for the next step. Walk through an arboretum or check with your local library, horticulture agent or look on the Internet to view your selections. Finally, consult your local nursery or garden center professional.

Although there is no such thing as a perfect tree, by asking yourself a few key questions and doing your homework, you will certainly be able to answer the question . . . what tree should I plant?

The trees in this brochure are grouped into four main categories; small (under 30'), medium (30-60'), large (over 60'), and evergreens. Within each category the trees are listed alphabetically and are followed by their botanical names. Heights and widths that best reflect the growth pattern for northeast Kansas are given as well as a brief description of each tree. Suggestions of cultivars are given when known. Why list cultivars? Sometimes cultivars have plant characteristics that are better in many ways than the species. For example, cultivars can have better heat and cold tolerance, increased disease resistance, and improved or more consistent fall color.

Small Trees under 30'

Name	Comments
American Hornbeam <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	H 20-30' x 20-30' W; tolerant of many conditions; use as hedge, screen, or formal element in landscape; will tolerate light shade; can take full sun but may scorch in extremely hot dry locations under drought conditions
Amur Maple <i>Acer ginnala</i>	H 15-20' x 15-20' W; hardy, perfect for small spaces like patio gardens, courtyards and containers or in a grouping; superior fall color. Cultivars: 'Embers', 'Flame', 'Red Rhapsody'
Chokecherry <i>Prunus virginiana</i>	H 20-30' x 15-20' W; white flowers in late April-May are followed by bright red fruits in summer; perfect for wildlife; interesting crooked branches and exfoliating bark make this tree an all-season ornamental. Cultivar: 'Canada Red'
Crabapple <i>Malus</i>	Over 600 cultivars; plant only those that have excellent flower, fruit and disease resistance, trees vary in size, shape and color. Suggested cultivars: 'Adams' H 20-25' x 20-25' W; carmine to pink buds changing to dull pink when mature, glossy red fruit, 'Prairiefire' H 15-20' x 15-20' W, a Pride of Kansas selection; crimson buds open to pinkish red flowers in spring, bears red fruit that does not drop; 'Donald Wyman' H 15-20' x 15-20' W; white flowers followed by glossy red fruit that remains into winter; 'Sugar Tyme' H 15-20' x 10-15' W; white flowers in spring with bright green foliage; holds berries throughout winter. For a complete listing of recommended varieties see K-State publication on Flowering Crabapples
Flowering Dogwood <i>Cornus florida</i>	H 12-15' x 10-15' W; grown mainly for spring flowers, however fall color can be spectacular; horizontal branches give layered look; use only in partial shade or as an understory tree; lawn mower damage to trunks can be devastating.
Fringetree <i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	H 12-15' x 10-15' W; grown for the white fringe-like fleecy flowers that hang in panicles from the branches in spring; lovely flower fragrance; very adaptable small flowering tree; full sun to part shade
Corneliancherry Dogwood <i>Cornus mas</i>	H 12-15' x 15-20' W; easy to grow dogwood with bright yellow flowers in late winter, usually February or early March. Bright red fruits may follow for birds. Plant in full sun or light shade.
Kousa Dogwood <i>Cornus Kousa</i>	H 12-15' x 8-10' W; a later spring flowering species of dogwood with white flowers after the tree leafs out. Nice fall color reddish-purple. More adaptable than the Flowering Dogwood but still best to plant out of harsh winds and sun.
Goldenrain Tree <i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	H 25-30' x 20-30' W; bright yellow flower clusters in summer changing to papery bronze capsules in fall that persist through the winter; drought, heat and wind tolerant; use as small patio tree, specimen or street tree
Hedge Maple <i>Acer campestre</i>	H 20-30' x 20-30' W; underused maple; perfect for small lawn, specimen or street tree; can use under utility lines because of low height; tough and tolerant.
Hophornbeam <i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	H 25-30' x 15-20' W; graceful appearance; a very tolerant tree that is great for commercial and residential use; slightly pyramidal in youth growing rounder with maturity; sun to part shade
Japanese Maple <i>Acer palmatum</i>	H 10-15' x 10-15' W; excellent small tree for the patio or courtyard; good specimen plant; most forms have deep red leaves that turn crimson in fall; plant in a protected area away from hot scorching winds
Japanese Tree Lilac <i>Syringa reticulata</i>	H 20-25' x 15-20' W; panicles of creamy white fragrant flowers in June; resistant to powdery mildew and borers. Cultivar: 'Ivory Silk'

(Small Trees under 30' continued)

Ornamental Pear <i>Pyrus calleryana</i>	H 30-40' x 15-25' W; height and width vary with cultivar; used as street or shade tree; grows rapidly; masses of white flowers appear in spring followed by glossy green leaves; great burgundy fall color Cultivars: ' Aristocrat ' - width is equal to height; ' Capital Pear ' - narrow and upright; ' Chanticleer ' aka " Cleveland Select " - upright pyramidal; ' Redspire ' - yellow rather than burgundy fall color DO NOT plant 'Bradford' cultivar; severe splitting occurs on 10-15 year old trees.
Redbud <i>Cercis canadensis</i>	H 20-30' x 25-35' W; very adaptable tree; pink-purple flowers on bare branches in spring, followed by heart-shaped leaves and abundant 2-4" seed pods; yellow-green fall color Cultivars: ' Alba ' – white flowers; ' Forest Pansy ' – purple foliage, may be less hardy; ' Oklahoma ' – shiny green leaves, plant in more protected area
Serviceberry <i>Amelanchier x grandiflora</i>	H 20-30' x 10-15' W; white flowers in spring followed by berry-like fruits in summer that birds adore; outstanding fall leaf color ranging from golds to yellows to reds; Pride of Kansas selection in 2001. Cultivar: ' Autumn Brilliance '; ' Robin Hill '
Seven Son Tree <i>Heptacodium miconiodes</i>	H 10-20' x 10' W; a multi-stem or single trunk form. Does well in full sun or part shade and tolerant of most soil conditions as long as well drained. Pale, creamy blooms appear in late summer or early fall which turn to showy, pinkish sepals well into the fall. Has peeling bark that resembles crape myrtle, very attractive.
Shantung Maple <i>Acer truncatum</i>	H 20-25' x 15-20' W; underused maple; heat and drought tolerant; leaves emerge reddish purple changing to dark glossy green in summer, then yellow-orange-red in fall; a 2003 Pride of Kansas selection
Smoketree <i>Cotinus coggygria</i>	H 10-15' x 10-15' W; beautiful reddish purple-colored foliage all season long; smoky pink, puffy plumes cover the plant in mid summer; best used as an accent or focal point. Cultivar: ' Royal Purple '
Sourwood <i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i>	H 20-30' x 20-30' W; excellent as specimen tree; all season ornamental with beautiful pinkish red fall coloring; second only to Flowering Dogwood in regards to universal appeal
Bracken's Brown Beauty <i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	H 10-20' x 6-12' W; an easy-to-care-for cold, hardy Southern magnolia with glossy, deep green leathery evergreen foliage. Flowers are large cup shaped creamy white that will open on and off throughout May and June. The fruit can be attractive, opening to reveal rose-red seeds.
Star and Saucer Magnolia <i>Magnolia hybrids</i>	H 15-20' x 10-15' W; multiple stemmed small tree, white star-like flowers in spring; blossoms may be damaged by late freezes; hybrid crosses available with pink flowers that bloom later in spring. Cultivars: ' Ann ', ' Beth ', ' Jane ', and ' Randy '
Sweetbay Magnolia <i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	H 15-20' x 15-20' W; often grown as a multi-stem tree with a nice habit; creamy white flowers with a sweet fragrance; leaves dark green on top with silvery undersides; does well in wet soils and will tolerate some shade; great four-season tree; the leaves are shiny and bright and green that hang on well into winter
Trident Maple <i>Acer buergerianum</i>	H 15-20' x 15-20' W; should be used more often; wonderful small patio tree; can also be used as lawn or street tree; protect trunk from winter sunscald when young
Weeping Cherry <i>Prunus subhirtella var. pendula</i>	H 8-10' x 8-10' W; weeping or drooping branches; double pink blossoms in spring; fast growth rate; water in summer, not drought tolerant
Weeping Mulberry <i>Morus</i>	H 8-10' x 8-10' W; drooping slender branches gracefully sweep the ground; no fruit; hardy; best used as a specimen tree

Medium Trees 30-60'

Name	Comments
American Linden <i>Tilia americana</i>	H 50-60' x 25-30' W; pyramidal habit; fragrant flowers in spring; glossy green foliage in summer; yellow fall color; great shade or street tree. Cultivar: 'Redmond'
Black Alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	H 30-40' x 25-25' W; grown as single or multi-stem; best for wet sites; full sun or partial shade; attractive foliage
Black Gum <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	H 30-50' x 20-30' W; beautiful tree known for lustrous green leaves in summer and consistent colorful red fall foliage; specimen tree or use in naturalized area
Ginkgo <i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	H 30-50' x 30-40' W; fan shaped leaves turn spectacular gold in fall; great tree for difficult landscape situations; looks better with age; full sun; plant only MALE trees . Cultivars: 'Autumn Gold' and 'Saratoga'
Hackberry <i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	H 50-60' x 50-60' W; does well in hot windy locations; does not mind pollution; fairly fast growing; upright rounded shape; rough bark
Honeylocust <i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	H 40-50' x 30-40' W; open crown and finely textured leaves provide dappled shade; excellent home landscape tree. Cultivars: 'Skyline' and 'Shademaster'
Kentucky Coffeetree <i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	H 50-60' x 40-50' W; new leaves tinged light pink to purple; handsome bark; whole tree is known for winter interest; pods are large and bean-like. Cultivar: 'Espresso' - fruitless variety
Lacebark Elm <i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	H 30-40' x 40-50' W; mottled peeling bark is combination of greys, greens, orange and brown; trunk sometimes fluted; ice, snow and storm damage may occur. Cultivar: 'Allee'
Littleleaf Linden <i>Tilia cordata</i>	H 40-50' x 30-35' W; uniform pyramidal shape; dense glossy foliage; fragrant flowers in early summer; a great shade tree requiring little maintenance; perfect for the street, city or home landscape. Cultivar: 'Greenspire'
Norway Maple <i>Acer platanoides</i>	H 40-50' x 25-30' W; covered with greenish yellow flowers in spring; lush green leaves in summer, turning brilliant yellow in fall; give this tree plenty of root room; may need protection from winter sunscald. Cultivar: 'Crimson King' - burgundy-wine leaf color
Dawn Redwood <i>Metasequoia glyptostroboides</i>	H 40-50' x 15-25' W; fast growing with pyramidal shape; exfoliating bark, and fine leaf texture; plant in moist soils; best used as an ornamental in the home landscape; street tree or in a park golf course setting
River Birch <i>Betula nigra</i>	H 30-40' x 20-30' W; best known for cream to cinnamon-brown peeling bark; used for winter interest in the landscape; produces dappled shade; usually multi-stemmed and pyramidal to rounded in shape; limbs will break in heavy ice and snow storms. Cultivars: 'Dura-Heat' ; 'Heritage'
Sawtooth Oak <i>Quercus acutissima</i>	H 40-50' x 40-60' W; a great shade tree for it is wide-spreading, male catkins in spring, sometimes leaves carry over from fall to spring; acorns abundant in fall
Shingle Oak <i>Quercus imbricaria</i>	H 50-60' x 50-60' W; new leaves emerge reddish then change to dark green in summer; fall color is like pin oak, yellow-brown to russet-red fall color-old leaves persist until spring; can use as hedge, screen, or wind break; iron chlorosis can be a problem
Sugar Maple <i>Acer saccharum</i>	H 50-60' x 40-50' W; slow growing tree, but worth the wait; heat tolerant and leaf tatter resistant; gorgeous fall coloration; known as the perfect shade tree. Cultivars: 'Legacy' 'Caddo' and 'Fall Fiesta'

(Medium Trees 30–60' continued)

Sweet Gum <i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	H 50-60' x 30-40' W; star shaped leaves turn yellow to crimson in fall; moist soil and full sun best; needs large area for root development; sweet gum balls drop in abundance so plant where they won't be a problem; prone to storm damage. Cultivar: ' Rotundiloba ' is a fruitless variety
Willow Oak <i>Quercus phellos</i>	H 40-60' x 30-40' W; leaves resemble a willow; leaves change from light green to dark green to yellow to bronze to red as the seasons progress; can tolerate wetter soils than most oaks

Large Trees greater than 60'

Name	Comments
American Elm <i>Ulmus hybs</i>	H 40-60' x 30-40' W; this stately tree is making a comeback with the introduction of cultivars that are highly resistant to Dutch Elm Disease and Elm Leaf Beetle. Tolerant of a wide range of conditions and a great shade tree. Cultivars: ' Accolade ', ' Frontier ' and ' Patriot '.
Baldcypress <i>Taxodium distichum</i>	H 50-70' x 20-30' W; use as a specimen or in groupings; a stately tree; will grow knobby 'knees' at base of trunk in wet situations but tolerates dry locations too; leaves are ferny in texture; a deciduous conifer. Cultivar: ' Frio River ' which is tolerant of high pH soils.
Bur Oak <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	H 60-80' x 60-80' W; large and stately; 30 years to full maturity – specimen shade tree; not known for fall color
English Oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	H 40-60' x 40-60' W; massive and grand; because of its size best used for parks and other large areas; columnar forms available. Cultivar: ' Fastigiata ' H 40-50'x 10-15'W; an upright columnar form
London Planetree <i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>	H 70-100' x 65-80' W; best used in large open areas; known for beautiful cream to olive splotchy bark; full sun or very light shade; adaptable to many landscape situations
Red Oak <i>Quercus rubra</i>	H 60-70' x 50-60' W; symmetrical and round-topped; fairly fast growing; street or landscape tree; russet to bright red leaves in fall; one of the best oaks for planting in the Midwest
Swamp White Oak <i>Quercus bicolor</i>	H 40-60' x 40-60' W; a great oak for the landscape. Tolerant of wetter areas but also drought tolerant once established. Fall color or yellow.
Shumard Oak <i>Quercus shumardii</i>	H 60-70' x 40-50' W; withstands drought; great shade tree
White Ash <i>Fraxinus americana</i>	H 50-70' x 40-50' W; deep green leaves turn rich red purple in fall; prone to wood borers when young. Cultivar: ' Autumn Purple '. The Emerald Ash Borer, has been found in many states but not yet in Kansas or Missouri. Emerald Ash Borer could be a problem.
White Oak <i>Quercus alba</i>	H 60-70'x 60-70' W; beautiful shade tree; outstanding claret red fall leaf color; slow growth but a durable long-lived tree.
Zelkova <i>Zelkova serrata</i>	H 60-70'x 30-40' W; vase shaped; similar to American elm; bronze red fall color; great shade tree. Cultivar: ' Green Vase '

Evergreens



Name	Comments
Arborvitae <i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Height and width depend on the variety planted; can range from a few feet to over 30'; tolerant of temperature extremes; prefers more evenly moist soils; can tolerate some dry conditions; full sun to light shade; use a specimen, accent screen or hedge. Cultivar: ' Degroot's Spire ' H 10-15' x 2-3' W and ' Emerald ' H 10-15' x 3-4' W
Green Giant Arborvitae <i>Thuja plicata</i>	H 20-30' x 10-15' W; this species is a cross and is highly recommended as one of the best evergreens for this area; the tree is rapid growing with a strong narrow pyramidal growth habit; has rich green foliage in summer; no reported problems except bagworms; somewhat deer resitant.
Fir	
White Fir <i>Abies concolor</i>	H 30-40' x 15-20' W; best fir for the Midwest; withstands heat and cold; must have even moisture; bright silver blue needles similar in appearance to Colorado Blue Spruce; check occasionally for spider mites
Juniper Species	
<i>Juniperus chinensis</i>	H 15-20' x 5' W; fast growing screen; dense with deep green color; pyramidal Cultivar: ' Spartan ' (W 5-10'). Cultivar: ' Keteleeri '; A broad pyramidal evergreen used as screen or hedge; glossy, light green; very common in the Midwest
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Great for windbreaks, specimen, grouping, screen; textured trunk, dense but very fine foliage; all-around utility tree that is tolerant of many adverse conditions; best used in low maintenance evergreen plantings; native to Kansas; compact and pyramidal. Cultivar: ' Canaertii ' H 20-30' x 15-20' W; ' Taylor ' H 15-20' x 5-8' W
Pine	
Eastern White Pine <i>Pinus strobus</i>	H 50-80' x 20-40' W; soft needles; fast growth rate; use as a quick screen or as an accent; very adaptable to a wide range of conditions except air pollutants and road salts
Limber Pine <i>Pinus flexilis</i>	H 30-40' x 15-30' W; upright form with good vigor; handsome soft blue-green needles. Cultivars: ' Vanderwolf's ' and ' Pyramid '
Spruce	
Colorado Blue Spruce <i>Picea pungens</i>	H 30-40' x 15-20' W; blue stiff needles; dense pyramidal growth; used as specimen, or in groupings; prefers rich, well drained evenly moist soil
Norway Spruce <i>Picea abies</i>	H 50-60' x 20-30' W; medium to fast growth rate; dark green foliage; planting in full sun with moist soil is best
White Spruce <i>Picea glauca</i>	H 40-60' x 10-20' W; very adaptable and tolerant of many adverse conditions; best in full sun, but will tolerate some shade; prefers even moisture. Cultivar: ' Black Hills ' (H 20-40'), slower growing and more dense than species

Works cited:

- Dirr, Michael A. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses*. Stipes Pub. L.L.C. 1975



What NOT to plant

Faster growing trees are not such a bonus. Many fast growing varieties are brittle with narrow crotch angles that can lead to severe breakage during storms. Plant trees for your own enjoyment but plant for your future and your children's future too!



Trees NOT recommended for the Kansas City area (Reason)

- Austrian Pine (disease)
- Box Elder (weak wood)
- Bradford Pear (weak wood)
- Cottonless Cottonwood (insect and disease)
- European White Birch (insect)
- Green Ash (Emerald Ash Borer)
- Lombardy Poplar (short lived)
- Pin Oak (soil issues)
- Scotch Pine (disease)
- Siberian Elm (weak wood)
- Silver Maple (weak wood)
- Silver Poplar (weak wood)
- Willow (weak wooded and canker)



Plant with Caution

- Red Maple (overplanted)
- White Ash (insects)
- Red/Silver Cross Acer x freemanii (weak wood)



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