

THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Guide to Selecting Trees

By Thomas LeRoy, County Extension Agent - Horticulture

Large Trees

American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia*, 80' H x 50' W - A shade tolerant native with smooth gray bark and bright chartreuse colored leaves in early spring. Prefers fertile, well-drained, acid soils. Intolerant of urban stresses.

Ash, *Fraxinus spp.* 80' H x 40' W - Green ash, *F. pennsylvanica*, and white ash, *F. americana*, are natives that deserve more attention. They are long-lived with good, yellow, fall color. The commonly planted Arizona ash, *F. velutina*, is much smaller, a rapid grower, but short-lived, with tangled limbs, and susceptibility to borers and not recommended.

Bald Cypress, *Taxodium disticum*, 80' H x 40' W - A fast growing, long-lived deciduous tree with distinct conical form. Commonly found in swampy areas, but it does well under dryland conditions and in heavy clay soils.

Blackgum, *Nyssa sylvatica*, 60' H x 30' W - This tree has beautiful burgundy-red color in early fall. It also has an interesting horizontal branching pattern. It is tolerant of a wide range of conditions but does best in moist, fertile soil.

Drummond Red Maple, *Acer rubrum Drummondii*, 70' H x 40' W - One of the best fast growing trees with flowers and seed (in samaras) which provide red color in early spring. Other native Texas maples having potential here: *A. saccharum*, Sugar Maple; *A. leucodeme*. Chalk Maple; and *A. grandidentatum*, Big-tooth Maple from the Uvalde area.

Elm, *Ulus spp.*, 80' H x 50' W - American Elm, *U. americana*, and Cedar Elm, *U. crassifolia*, are natives well suited to the Montgomery County area. True Chinese Elm (sometimes called Drakes Evergreen Elm), *U. parvifolia*, is an excellent landscape tree.

Linden(Basswood), *Tilia spp.*, 70' H x 30' W - Rarely planted in area landscapes, but a species native to Texas deserving more attention. Yellow autumn foliage and tolerance of urban stresses has made them a favored street tree in other parts of the country.

Oak, *Quercus spp.*, 80' H x 50' W - Oaks may be divided into two groups: red oaks and white oaks. Acorns mature in two years in the red oak group and the leaves generally have bristles on their tips. Acorns mature in one year in the white oak group and the leaf margins are usually smooth.

Red Oaks: Shumard Oak, *Q. shumardii*, Texas Red Oak, *Q. texana*, and Nuttall Oak, *Q. nuttallii* are three of the best red oaks for this area. Shumard and Texas Red Oak have glossy foliage and are tolerant of mildly alkaline soils. Nuttall Oak is particularly adapted to our heavy clay soils both have red fall color. Water Oak, *Q. nigra*, and Willow Oak, *Q. phellos*, have a reputation for fast growth but are susceptible to iron chlorosis and other problems.

White Oaks: Several members of this group deserve more attention. Bur Oak, *Q. macrocarpa*, has heavy spreading limbs, very large acorns and is tolerant of alkaline soils and urban stress. Swamp Chesnut Oak, *Q. michauxii*, is an excellent large shade tree which tolerates heavy clay soils. White Oak, *Q. alba*, is less tolerant of urban stresses and prefers well-drained, acid soils, but it is a very attractive shade tree. Live Oak, *Q. virginiana*, is our most popular oak because of its broad spreading form, evergreen leaves and tolerance of a wide range of local soil conditions.

Oriental Oaks: A number of Chinese and Japanese Oaks such as *Q. chennii* and *Q. acutissima*, deserve further testing in our area. Sawtooth Oak, *Q. acutissima*, is a relatively fast-growing oak which produces large acorn crops at an early age. This makes it especially desirable for wildlife plantings. It is also suited to a wide range of soil conditions.

Mexican Oaks: A number of oaks growing at higher elevations in Mexico are ideal for the Montgomery Co. area. Many are small in stature and most are evergreen. Thus far three species have been popular: Monterrey Oak, *Q. polymorpha*, Loquat-leaved oak, *Q. rhizophylla*, and Canby Oak, *Q. canbyi*.

Pecan, *Carya illinoensis*, 80' H x 50' W - This is the state tree of Texas. Recommended

varieties for nut production include Desirable, Choctaw, Cheyenne, Caddo, Elliot, Sumner, Cape Fear, and Melrose. Other species of *Carya* are hickories such as Shagbark and Nutmeg Hickory. Though rarely available and difficult to transplant, they deserve more use since they are long-lived, relatively pest free and have good fall color.

Pine, *Pinus* spp. 80' H x 40' W - Slash pine, *P. elliotii*, is unfortunately, one of the most frequently planted pines in this area. It is very susceptible to fusiform rust which disfigures the trunk and branches. Loblolly Pine, *P. taeda*, is native to this area, closely resembles Slash Pine, and is less susceptible to fusiform rust. Spruce Pine, *P. glabra*, is smaller than our native pines with low, dense branches and should be used more often.

Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, 80' H x 40' W - This is a narrow-crowned tree with good fall color. It is tolerant of moist soil conditions but prefers fertile, slightly acid soils. There are several Asian species and a variety that does not produce sweetgum balls.

Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, 80' H x 40' W - This tree is fast growing and widely planted. It has attractive bark and large yellow-green leaves. Unfortunately, it is susceptible to serious insect and disease problems which may defoliate the tree several times per season. Mexican Sycamore has fewer problems and the underside of the leaves are a silvery white.

Tuliptree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, 70' H x 25' W - This species is rarely planted this far west, but once established, it does very well in Montgomery County. It has interesting greenish-yellow, tulip-shaped flowers. The tulip tree prefers rich, moist, well-drained soils.

Small Trees

American Holly, *Ilex opaca*, 40' H x 25' W -

This is an evergreen holly with abundant red berries on female trees. It is fairly slow-growing and long-lived. It prefers loamy, acid soils.

Anaqua, *Ehretia anacua*, 40' H x 35' W - This tree is drought resistant and relatively disease free with interesting rough leaves. It should be planted more in Montgomery County.

Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*, 40' H x 25' W - A fast growing, deciduous native with distinctive bark and coppery autumn color.

Camphor, *Cinnamomum camphora*, 40' H x 25' W - An excellent evergreen tree. Not planted as much as it used to be because of messy black berries and abundant seedlings that sprout easily. It may be frozen back in a hard winter.

Carolina Buckthorn, *Rhamnus caroliniana*, 15' H x 10' W - This is a small, native, deciduous tree or large shrub which is easily transplanted. It prefers a moist, fertile, acid soil in full sun to partial shade. In August, it has bright red berries which turn black in September. The berries are very attractive to birds.

Lime Prickly-Ash, *Zanthoxylum fagara*, 15' H x 10' W - A small, thorny tree with fine-textured, lime-green foliage.

Mesquite, *Prosopis juliflora*, 30' H x 35' W - This is an excellent tree with good drought tolerance and a weeping growth habit. It is adapted to hot, dry areas, but with a little water and fertilizer it makes beautiful growth. There is also a screw-bean mesquite that is rare, but worth searching out because of its unusual seed pods.

Possumhaw, *Ilex decidua*, 15' H x 10' W - A deciduous, small-leaved holly. Females have berries which turn red when leaves fall and hang on through the winter.

Red Bay, *Persea borbonia*, 30' H x 20' W - This evergreen tree grows best in sandy, acid soils. The leaves are a substitute for true bay.

River Birch, *Betula nigra*, 40' H x 20' W - This is one of the few species that is tolerant of wet soils. It has attractive, peeling bark and the foliage casts light shade.

Sassafras, *Sassafras albidum*, 35' H x 20' W - This is a tree with good fall color and attractive mitten-shaped leaves. Large specimens are difficult to transplant and they prefer sandy, acid soil. The tree, however, is long-lived and free from most pests. The berries make good wildlife food and sassafras tea can be made from the roots.

Cherry Laurel, *Prunus caroliniana*, 25' H x 15' W - This tree is evergreen and fast growing, but susceptible to peach tree borers. The fruit is popular with birds.

Chinese Pistache, *Pistacia chinensis*, 40' H x 30' W - This tree often has good yellow to red fall color. Male trees are preferred because of the copious amount of messy fruit produced by the female. To be sure, you would have to rely on grafted male specimens. Texas Pistachio, *P. texana*, is a small tree with purple fall color that is well adapted to alkaline soils. Both of these trees should be planted more often.

Dahoon Holly, *Ilex cassine*, 15' H x 10' W - This is a beautiful, narrow-leaved holly. It needs acid soil and good drainage. Only females produce berries.

Flame-Leaf Sumac, *Rhus copallina*, 15' H x 10' W - This small tree has bright red fall coloration and attractive fruit which is eaten by birds. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun.

Yaupon, *Ilex vomitoria*, 15' H x 10' W - A small-leaved, evergreen holly, this tree is more tolerant of a broad variety of soil conditions than other hollies. Females have red berries. Weeping and dwarf varieties are available.

Flowering & Fruiting Trees

Anacacho Orchid Tree, *Bauhinia congesta*, 10' H x 10' W - This native orchid tree has white flowers and good hardiness. *B. forficata* is also hardy with larger white blooms. It sometimes gets freeze damage, but comes back. *B. purpurea* and *B. punctata* have been grown with some success. *B. punctata* has striking orange-red flowers. A pink-flowered Mexican species, *B. macranthera*, similar to *B. congesta* is hardy and has been crossed with *B. congesta*.

Banana Shrub, *Michelia figo*, 15' H x 10' W - A small evergreen tree or large shrub similar to Southern Magnolia but with smaller leaves and small flowers that have a distinct banana fragrance. It prefers loamy, acid soil.

Buckeye, *Aesculus spp.*, 15' H x 10' W - *A. pavia*, Red Buckeye, is a beautiful, small, red-flowering tree with coppery new growth in the spring. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions and will grow in partial shade. *A. arguta*, Texas Buckeye, has spikes of dense yellow flowers, does well in alkaline soils and is a native of the Edwards Plateau. Mexican Buckeye, *Ungnadia speciosa*, is a small tree with showy pink flower clusters.

Texas Persimmon, *Diospyros texana*, 30' H x 15' W - This species main attribute is its slate gray bark. Male trees are preferred because of the messy (but delicious) black fruit on the female trees. Common Persimmon, *D. virginiana*, is also a good tree. Both are tolerant of mildly alkaline, clay soils.

Callery Pear, *Pyrus calleryana*, 30' H x 20' W - This could be one of our best flowering trees in the south, but it needs more selection for fire blight resistance. Not all Callery Pears bloom well in the south because of insufficient chilling.

Chaste Tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, 15' H x 10' W - This plant is usually a multi-trunk tree or huge shrub with bright purple flowers and aromatic foliage. A white-flowered form is also available. *Vitex* prefers well-drained soils, but it is actually very easy to grow.

Crape Myrtle, *Lagerstroemia spp.*, 20' H x 10' W - The Common Crape Myrtle, *L. indica*, is a prominent feature in our summer landscapes. Flower colors include white, lavender, near-red and various in-between colors. Dwarf indicas are also now available. Japanese Crape Myrtle, *L. fauriei*, is larger than the indica, much more vigorous, has white flowers and a cinnamon-red bark. It is also resistant to powdery mildew. The National Arboretum is crossing the indica with *fauriei* to produce larger, amazingly vigorous trees with mildew resistance. The Basham Party Pink Crape Myrtle is a hybrid that was found in Houston by Mr. Bill Basham. It may reach heights of 30 feet with 40 foot crown spread. Flowers are lavender pink and the variety has good mildew resistance.

Dogwood, *Cornus florida*, 25' H x 20' W - This tree demands a sandy acid soil and partial shade. Pink-flowered varieties are available but generally not well adapted. It also has good fall color and fruit valued by wildlife.

Farkleberry, *Vaccinium arboreum*, 15' H x 10' W - This semi-evergreen native tree or shrub has red to burgundy autumn color. Flowers are small, white, and bell-shaped. It is adapted to a wide range of conditions and thrives in full sun to semi-shade.

Fringe Tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*, 25' H x 15' W - This native of East Texas prefers loamy, acid soil and full sun to partial shade. It is spectacular with lacy-white flowers in spring. There is also a Chinese Fringe tree, *C. retusus*, that has showier flowers.

Golden Rain Tree, *Koelreuteria bipinnata*, 30' H x 25' W - This is one of the most popular small flowering trees because of its fast growth and spectacular yellow flowers plus coral-colored seed capsules. It is native China.

Hawthorn, *Crataegus spp.*, 20' H x 20' W - There are a number of beautiful small flowering trees in this Genus most notably Parsley Hawthorn, *C.marshallii*, and Mayhaw, *C.opaca*. Attractive peeling bark and good wildlife food are some of the many attributes of the Genus. They are also tolerant of most soil conditions and partial shade.

Jerusalem Thorn, *Parkinsonia aculeata*, 25' H x 20' W - This species is valued for its bright yellow flowers and foliage that casts very little shade, allowing plants growing underneath plenty of light to flower. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun.

Mexican Plum, *Prunus mexicana*, 20' H x 15' W - This tree is valued for its intensely fragrant white flowers and attractive peeling bark. The small fruit is sometimes used for jams and jellies. Fortunately, pests like the fruit borer don't seem to bother this tree. Worms in the fruit, however, are still likely without sprays.

Necklace Tree, *Sophora affinis*, 20' H x 15' W -

This is a tough, small, flowering tree that along with its more shrub-like relative, *S. secundiflora*, or Texas Mountain Laurel should be used more in southern landscapes. It does well on mildly alkaline soils. Seeds are poisonous.

Redbud, *Cercis Canadensis*, 25' H x 20' W - This is a tree prized for the production of early mauve flowers, but white flowered forms are available. It may be difficult to transplant, but once established it is fast growing through short-lived.

Rusty Blackhaw, *Viburnum rufidulam*, 15' H x 10' W - White flowers in the spring, lustrous green leaves, and burgundy-red color are major attributes of this small tree.

Southern Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, 70' H x 40' W - Beautiful glossy foliage and huge white and fragrant flowers make this evergreen one of the most popular trees in the south. Sweetbay Magnolia, *M. virginiana*, is another excellent tree that is usually deciduous with smaller but fragrant flowers. It rarely exceeds 40 feet in height and is very tolerant of difficult conditions (except drought). Oriental magnolias such as *M. soulangiana*, are also deciduous with spectacular flowers in the early spring. These rarely exceed 20 feet in height.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or natural origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Revised August 2002.