

# TREE SPECIES SELECTION: NURSERY SPECS

*Whether purchasing a tree for your property or for a municipality – aim for the best quality you can afford. Good tree form and health are important elements of successful tree planting, survival and maintenance.*



Communities, especially without arboriculture staff, are often unaware of the importance of tree structure and condition when purchasing trees for planting. This is very important, especially when planting trees along the street, for health, tree longevity, and future maintenance costs. The guidelines are also helpful for homeowners looking at trees in a nursery or garden center.

The information and additional illustrations can be found in full at the Urban Tree Foundation:

[Specification Guidelines for Container-grown Trees for California](#)

The intent is to help communities develop their own comprehensive and detailed specifications to ensure that they obtain high quality container-grown nursery trees suitable for street planting. Getting trees with good form reduces the development of poor branching patterns which can be problematic in high traffic areas.

Homeowners and other tree purchasers will also benefit from the illustrations, showing what to look for in roots, trunk and crown, to get the best tree possible.

## TREE HEALTH

- Typical for species, healthy and vigorous
- Relatively free of pests
- Crown form typical and not significantly deformed by wind, pruning practices, pests or other factors
- Leaf color and size typical for time of year and stage of growth, not stunted, misshapen, tattered, discolored or otherwise atypical

## TREE CROWN

- A single, relatively straight, central leader
- Tapered trunk
- No codominant stems
- Vigorous, upright branches
- If the original leader has been headed a new leader at least 1/2 the diameter of the original present

## MAIN BRANCHES

- Shall be well-spaced
- Branch diameter shall be no greater than 2/3 of the diameter of the trunk, measured 1" above the branch
- Attachment of scaffold branches shall be free of included bark

Preferred



Unacceptable



## TRUNK

- Diameter and taper shall be sufficient to allow the tree to remain vertical without the support of a stake
- Free of wounds, sunburned areas, conks, wood cracks, bleeding areas, signs of boring insects, galls cankers and lesions
- Trunk diameter at 6" above the soil surface shall be within these ranges:
  - 5 gallon: 0.5" to 0.75"
  - 15 gallon: 0.75" to 1.5"
  - 24" box: 1.5" to 2.25"

## ROOTS

- Trunk and root collar and large roots must be free of circling and/or kinked roots
- Soil removal near the root collar may be necessary to inspect roots
- Tree shall be well rooted in the soil mix; rootball shall remain intact when the container is removed and when the trunk is lifted carefully, the trunk and root system shall move as one
- Upper-most roots or root collar < 1" above/below soil surface
- Rootball free of large circling or bottom-matted roots

**Preferred**

**Unacceptable**

No circling or kinked roots



**Preferred**

**Unacceptable**

Well-rooted and intact rootball



Upper-most roots at or above soil level



Free of circling roots

