

# TREE SELECTION

*Planting the right tree for your growing space and for future maintenance needs takes some thought. It is best to work with the natural characteristics of the tree, rather than fight it.*



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A successful urban forest means retaining trees, managing trees and planting trees. But what trees are the best to keep or plant?

- Fast-growing trees that provide visual impact and shade quickly?
- Small trees that don't interfere with buildings or views?

The best trees are healthy trees already existing on the site. The next best trees are the “right tree for the right place”.

Factors like available growing space (above and below ground), mature size, growing requirements, pest and disease resistance, must all be considered when selecting a tree species. Poor tree condition or even mortality is often a result of a tree being planted on a site that will not provide what the tree needs to survive and be healthy.

## **NATIVE OR NON-NATIVE SPECIES?**

This is a common question and the answer is “it depends”.

Native species provide many benefits to people and to wildlife. But they are not always appropriate for every planting site. A lawn or park area is quite different from a tree pit or tree lawn. And a natural area is more different still.

The characteristics of native trees and their ability to grow in a planting site's conditions vary: shade/sun, drought/wet, mature size and form, utilities, human usage, pollution and salt tolerance.

In brief, the simple answer would be –

- Planting in an open/green space/lawn – In the landscaped environment, there are many native trees that could grow with sufficient root space and it is likely that there is at least one that will also be successful with the specific site light, moisture and maintenance requirements, and with the preferences of the owner.
- Planting in a downtown/treepit/tree lawn – there are some native trees that may withstand these difficult conditions, where drought, compaction and limited root space occur. But the choice is much smaller and when mature size and growth habit and fruit are considered, even smaller. Tough sites require tough trees and as long as the selected species are not invasive, there are some non-native species, as well as cultivars of native species, that may be suitable.

## **RELATED RESOURCES**

[Grow Native Massachusetts](#)

[Audubon Best Plants for Birds](#)

## LARGE TREE OR SMALL TREE?

This is another common question and, again, the answer is “it depends”. Large maturing species such as white oak planted in our urban areas return many more benefits than smaller maturing species such as dogwood. However, the benefits of a large tree will not be realized if the tree is not given both the soil volume and above-ground space it needs to reach its mature size. Always seek to plant the largest growing species that the planting site will accommodate in the future.

## SELECTING THE BEST QUALITY TREE

Whether planting in a yard or downtown, there are a number of observations to make before deciding on the trees species. Finding the “right tree for the right place” requires careful consideration. Link to pdf d3 Tree Species Selection: Nursery Specifications

## SELECTING THE RIGHT SPECIES FOR THE SITE

Whether planting in a yard or downtown, there are a number of observations to make before deciding on the trees species. Finding the “right tree for the right place” requires careful consideration. Tree Species Selection: What to Consider

## TREE LISTS

Lists of trees for specific situations abound. They are often a good starting point, but other factors must be considered to narrow down the list to truly suitable species for your chosen site.

Any tree list will be limited by its location –

- Municipal: downtown vs residential, businesses vs greenway
- Difficult sites and situations: wet areas, dry areas, ice storm resistance, salt tolerance

[Salt Tolerant Native Plants](#)

[Soil & Spray Salt Tolerance](#)

[Trees for Parking Lots and Paved Areas](#)

[Plants for Wet or Damp Areas](#)

[Tolerance to Black Walnut Toxicity](#)

[Ice Resistant Species](#)

[Ice Resistant Tree Populations](#)

## RELATED RESOURCES

[The Large Tree Argument](#)

[Comparison of benefits from large and small maturing trees](#)

## RELATED RESOURCES

[The Right Tree in the Right Place](#)

[Casey Trees® Urban Tree Selection Guide](#)

## TREE SELECTOR TOOLS

Not sure where to start? There are numerous tree selector tools developed by different states and non-profit groups. These tools are interactive programs designed to match specific tree species to planting sites based on compatible characteristics.

[Virginia Urban Street Tree Selector](#)

[Cornell University Woody Plants Database](#)

[Morton Arboretum Search Trees and Plants](#)

[Northern Tree Selector](#)

[Illinois Selecting Trees for Your Home](#)