

Tree selection: The right tree for the right site  
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Trees can live and enhance the landscape for 100 or more years if they are placed in the right location and given proper care. Selecting the right tree for the right site is an important step toward assuring a tree's long-term success. A properly selected tree will thrive and be a welcome addition to the landscape. Poorly chosen plants may grow too large, cause problems with utility wires, become stressed and pest ridden, drop messy fruits, or simply not survive.

In order to assure a tree's success, it takes some homework and careful consideration. Many homeowners make the mistake of choosing a tree before determining if it fits into their landscape site. A better approach, before choosing and purchasing a tree, is to decide on the attributes that will provide you with the most satisfaction and to determine where a tree is needed and how that tree should function in the landscape. For example, you may be interested in planting a tree to shade your home, to provide a natural windscreen or privacy border, to provide food for wildlife, or maybe just to appreciate its natural or ornamental beauty. Regardless of your reasons, once you are aware of them, it is much easier to choose a tree that will meet your needs.

When selecting a tree, look at the conditions of the chosen site, including: space available for crown and root growth, soil type, soil drainage, amount of sun or shade, and hardiness zone for the area. Once this information is considered, it is then easier to choose a tree that will be the right size and be tolerant of your site conditions. After the necessary information about the site is gathered, it is important to decide what characteristics you are looking for in a tree. Trees have different growth habits (oval, columnar, vase-shaped, weeping) that can provide a lot of character to a landscape. You may also be interested in the tree's flowering season, color of blooms, or bloom duration. Trees also have various leaf shapes, colors, sizes, and seasonal attributes, such as winter appearance (bark, twig color, branching angles), fall color, or persistent fruits, seed pods, or cones.

Any tree that is chosen should be viewed as a long-term investment, so it is to your advantage to take the time to do the selection footwork before planting. This will bring you the most enjoyment and satisfaction from your tree choices.