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Research and Extension
Master Gardener
Johnson County

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

Shape	• Are you looking for columnar? • Rounded? • Weeping? • Vase shaped? • Spreading? • Pyramidal?		**Future care**	• The future water and pruning requirements?

Expectations	• Do you want a tree that blooms? • Shade tree? • Tree with great fall color?

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 less than 30'

Name	Comments
Amur Maple *Acer ginnala*	H 15-20' x 15-20' W; hardy, very good for small spaces like patio gardens, courtyards and containers or in a grouping; usually grown in multi-stemmed form; superior fall color. Cultivars: **'Flame'**
Chinese Fringetree *Chionanthus retusus*	H 15-20' x 15-20' W; used as a specimen or in groupings; grown for the white fringe-like fleecy flowers that hang in panicles in the spring; lovely flower fragrance; very adaptable small tree; Cultivar: **'China Snow'** *Note of Caution with a related species: The White Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) is not recommended here due to susceptibility to the Emerald Ash Borer.
Chokecherry *Prunus virginiana*	H 20-30 x 15-20 W; white flowers in late April-May are followed by bright red fruits in summer; perfect for wildlife; may sucker around base and tree roots. Cultivar: **'Canada Red'** (foliage emerges green and turns burgundy)
Crabapple *Malus species*	Over 600 cultivars; plant only those that have excellent flower, fruit and disease resistance, trees vary in size, shape and color. Suggested cultivars: **'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'** H15-20' 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; **'Indian Magic'** H 15 x 15 W, round form; deep pink flowers; small red fruit. For a complete listing of recommended varieties see K-State publication on Flowering Crabapples
Flowering Dogwood *Cornus florida*	H 12-15' x 10-15' W; grown mainly for spring flowers, fall color can be spectacular; horizontal branches give layered look; best in partial shade or as an understory tree; sunnier areas need more consistent moisture; lawn mower damage to trunks can be devastating. Cultivars: **'Cloud 9'**, Cherokee Series – **'Princess'**, **'Brave'**, **'Chief'**
Fringetree *Chionanthus virginicus*	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; Missouri native; Cultivar: **'China Snow'** (C. retutus)
Corneliancherry Dogwood *Cornus mas*	H 15-20' 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 *Cornus kousa*	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 afternoon sun. Cultivar: **'Milky-Way'**
Goldenrain Tree *Koelreuteria paniculata*	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 *Acer campestre*	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. Cultivar: **'Queen Elizabeth'**
Ironwood *Ostrya virginiana*	H 25-30' x 15-20' W; graceful appearance; a very tolerant native tree that is great for commercial and residential use; slightly pyramidal in youth growing rounder with maturity; sun to part shade
Japanese Maple *Acer palmatum*	H 10-20 '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; many forms, sizes and cultivars available: **'Bloodgood'**, **'Emperor I'**

Small Trees less than 30' (Continued)

Japanese Tree Lilac *Syringa reticulata*	H 20-25' x 15-20'W; panicles of creamy white fragrant flowers in June; resistant to powdery mildew and borers. Cultivar: **'Ivory Silk'**; **'Snow Cap'** (smaller form)
Red Horsechestnut *Aesculus x carnea*	H 20-30 x 20-30 W; large clusters of pinkish-red flowers in spring, followed by large leaves. Best if planted in sun; may scorch in hot summer sun if not properly watered. Cultivar: **'Briottii'**
Redbud *Cercis canadensis*	H 20-30' x 25-35' W; very adaptable native 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, deeper purple flowers); **'The Rising Sun'** (apricot to gold to lime foliage)
Serviceberry *Amelanchier x grandiflora*	H 20-30' x 10-15' W; Native tree; 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; usually multi-stemmed; Pride of Kansas selection in 2001. Cultivar: **'Autumn Brilliance'**
Seven Son Tree *Heptacodium miconiodes*	H 15-20' 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 booms appear in late summer or early fall which become showy; pinkish sepals well into the fall; good pollinator; Has pealing bark that resembles crape myrtle, very attractive.
Shantung Maple *Acer truncatum*	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. Cultivars: **'Crimson Sunset'**; '**Pacific Sunset'**; **'Norwegian Sunset'**
Smoketree *Cotinus coggygria*	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. Cultivars: **'Royal Purple'**; **'Golden Spirit'**
Sourwood *Oxydendrum* arboreum	H 20-30' x 20-30' W; excellent native that can be used as specimen tree; all season ornamental with beautiful pinkish red fall coloring; small white urn-shaped drooping flowers give interest in June.
Star and Saucer Magnolia *Magnolia hybrids*	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 flowers that bloom at varying times. Cultivars: **'Royal Star'**, **'Ann'**; **'Jane'**, **'Betty', 'Butterflies'**
Sweetbay Magnolia *Magnolia virginiana*	H15-20' 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; Cultivar: **'Henry Hicks'**
Trident Maple *Acer buergerianum*	H20-25' x 20-25' W; should be used more often; wonderful small patio tree; new leaf growth often a rich bronze to purple; fall color is yellow, orange to red; can also be used as lawn or street tree; protect trunk from winter sunscald when young. Cultivar: **'Streetwise'** (burgundy red in autumn)
Weeping Cherry *Prunus subhirtella var. pendula*	H10-15' x 10-15' W; graceful weeping or drooping branches; double pink blossoms in spring; fast growth rate; water in summer, not drought tolerant; Cultivar: **'Snow Fountains'** (white)
Weeping Mulberry *Morus species*	H 8-10' x 8-10' W; drooping slender branches gracefully sweep the ground; no fruit; hardy; best used as a specimen tree; Cultivars: **'Pendula'**, **'Chaparral'**, **'Urbana'**

Medium Trees 30–60'

Name	Comments
American Linden *Tilia americana*	H 50-60' x 25-35' W; pyramidal habit; fragrant flowers in spring; glossy green foliage in summer; yellow fall color; good shade or street tree (may need to limb up lower branches). Caution: Japanese Beetles can skeletonize foliage, Cultivar: **'Redmond'**
Black Alder *Alnus glutinosa*	H 30-40' x 20-25' W; grown as single or multi-stem; best for wet sites; full sun or partial shade; attractive foliage; fruit is an interesting small woody strobile.
Black Gum *Nyssa sylvatica*	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; slow growing; Cultivar: **'Wild Fire'**
Ginkgo *Ginkgo biloba*	H 30-50' x 30-40' W; fan shaped leaves turn spectacular gold in fall; great tree for difficult landscape situations; extremely pest free; looks better with age; full sun; **plant only MALE trees**. Cultivars: **'Autumn Gold'** and **Presidential Gold'**
Hackberry *Celtis occidentalis*	H 50-60' x 50-60' W; does well in hot windy locations; does not mind pollution; fairly fast growing; upright rounded shape; interesting rough bark. Cultivar: **'Prairie Sentinel'** - Columnar, upright form.
Honey locust *Gleditsia triacanthos*	H 40-50' x 30-40' W; open crown and finely textured leaves provide light, dappled shade; excellent home landscape tree. Cultivars: **'Skyline'**, **'Shademaster'** and **'Imperial'**
Hornbeam Carpinus betulus	H 35-50' X 30-40'W; Upright fishbone branching give tree air of aloofness and give great winter effect; choice specimen; excellent for screens, hedges, or in groupings; Cultivars: **'Columnaris'**, **'Fastigiata'**, **'Franz Fontaine'**
Kentucky Coffeetree *Gymnocladus dioicus*	H 50-60' x 40-50' W; new leaves tinged light pink to purple; bold winter habit and handsome bark; pods are large and bean-like. Cultivar: **'Espresso'**- fruitless variety
Lacebark Elm *Ulmus parvifolia*	H 30-40' x 40-50' W; tough durable tree for about any situation; mottled peeling bark is combination of greys, greens, orange and brown; trunk sometimes fluted; ice, snow and storm damage may occur. Cultivar: **'Allee'**; **'Emerald Prairie'**
Littleleaf Linden *Tilia cordata*	H 45-60' x 25-35' W; uniform pyramidal shape; dense glossy foliage; fragrant flowers in early summer; a great shade tree requiring little maintenance; good shade tree for the street, city or home landscape. Caution: Attracts Japanese Beetles; Cultivar: **'Greenspire'**
Miyabe Maple *Acer miyabei*	H 30-40' x 20-25' W; Upright-oval to rounded habit; good specimen tree for the small residential yard; yellow fall color; handsome corky bark; like Hedge Maple, but larger with a more ascending branch habit; Cultivar: **'State Street'** (also called **'Morton'**)
Norway Maple Acer platanoides	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 leaf
Red Maple *Acer rubrum*	H 40-50' x 35-45' W; Pyramidal in youth and later develops an ovoid or rounded crown; used as a specimen tree in the lawn, park or street; showy red flowers in early spring; outstanding fall color from orange to brilliant red; Obviously a beautiful tree, but plant with caution: has weak structure; very susceptible to sunscald, leaf scorch and chlorosis; widely overplanted; Cultivars: **'Autumn Blaze'**, **'October Glory'**, **'Red Sunset'**
Redwood, Dawn *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*	H 40-60' x 20-25' W; fast growing with pyramidal shape and strong central leader; fine leaf texture; interesting exfoliating bark; plant in moist soils; best used as an ornamental in the home landscape or in a park or golf course setting; excellent in groves along streams or lakes.
River Birch *Betula nigra*	H 30-40' x 20-30' W; fast growing with upright habit; best known for cream to cinnamon-brown peeling bark for winter interest; produces dappled shade; usually sold in multi-stemmed from; limbs will break in ice and snow storms; partial leaf drop common in hot, dry spells. Cultivars: **'Dura-Heat'**, **'Heritage'**

Sawtooth Oak *Quercus acutissima*	H 40-50' x 40-60' W; pyramidal habit in youth and becoming oval-rounded to broad-rounded at maturity; a great shade tree for it is wide-spreading, male catkins in spring, acorns abundant in fall; sometimes leaves carry over from fall to spring.
Shingle Oak *Quercus imbricaria*	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 in fall; old leaves persist until spring; can use as hedge, screen, or wind break; iron chlorosis can be a problem.
Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum*	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: **'Oregon Trail'**, **'John Pair'**, **'Caddo'**, **'Bonfire'**, **'Fall Fiesta'**
Willow Oak *Quercus phellos*	H 40-60' x 30-40' W; pyramidal in youth and developing a dense oblong oval to rounded crown; splendid avenue, park or street tree; leaves are willow-like giving it a fine texture; leaves change from light to dark green in summer and then yellow to bronze-red in the fall; can tolerate wetter soils than most oaks.

Large Trees greater than 60'

Name	Comments
American Elm *Ulmus hybrids*	H 50-70' x 30-45' 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: **'Triumph'**, **'Frontier'** and **'Valley Forge'**
Baldcypress *Taxodium distichum*	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: **'Shawnee Brave'**
Bur Oak *Quercus macrocarpa*	H 60-80' x 60-80' W; large and stately; coarse texture in all seasons, but majestically so; 30 years to full maturity – specimen shade tree for large areas; not known for good fall color.
English Oak *Quercus robur*	H 40-65' 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; **'Crimson Spire'** (oval-upright with reddish fall color)
London Planetree *Platanus x acerifolia*	H 70-100' x 65-80' W; noble tree 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; large leaves & globose fruit can be messy; Cultivars: **'Bloodgood'** (anthracnose resistant)
Pin Oak *Quercus palustris*	H 50-65' x 25-40' W; pyramidal in youth with oval outline at maturity; strong central leader; popular street and lawn shade tree; subject to chlorosis in high pH soils; can be overplanted; fall coloration variable.
Red Oak *Quercus rubra*	H 60-70' x 50-60' W; symmetrical, wide 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 *Quercus bicolor*	H 40-60' x 40-60' W; broad round topped crown at maturity, a great oak for the landscape. Tolerant of wetter areas but also drought tolerant once established. Fall color is yellow.
Sweet Gum *Liquidambar styraciflua*	H 55-60' 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'** (fruitless variety)

Shumard Oak *Quercus shumardii*	H 60-70' x 40-50' W; pyramidal in youth and becoming more wide spreading; withstands drought conditions once established; a great shade tree that can tolerant higher pH soils than Pin Oak; leaves can turn a good russet-red in the fall.
White Oak *Quercus alba*	H 60-70'x 60-70' W; majestic and handsome oak; outstanding claret red fall leaf color; not readily available in nursery trade due to production difficulties; slow growth but a durable long-lived tree.
Zelkova *Zelkova serrata*	H 50-70'x 30-40' W; vase shaped in youth and maintaining ascending branches at maturity; similar to American elm; bronze red fall color (but can be variable); good shade tree for lawns, streets and parks; Cultivar: **'Green Vase'**

Evergreens

Name	Comments
Arborvitae *Thuja occidentalis*	Height and width depend on the variety planted; can range from a few feet to over 30'; prefers more evenly moist soils and good drainage; not drought tolerate; full sun to light shade; use a specimen, accent screen or hedge. Cultivar: **'Degroot's Spire'** H 10-15' x 3-5' W and **'Emerald'** H 10-15' x 3-4' W
Green Giant Arborvitae *Thuja plicata*	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; somewhat deer resistant, water during drought. Cultivar: **'Spring Grove'**
Juniper Species	
Juniperus chinensis	H 15-20' x 5' W; fast growing screen; dense with deep green color; pyramidal Cultivars: **'Spartan'** (W 5-8'), **'Keteleeri'** (5-6'); A broad pyramidal evergreen used as screen or hedge; glossy, light green; very common in the Midwest
Juniperus virginiana	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 4-5' W
Magnolia	
Bracken's Brown Beauty *Magnolia grandiflora*	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.
Pine	
Eastern White Pine *Pinus strobus*	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. Cultivars: **'Fastigiata'**, **'Pendula'**
Limber Pine *Pinus flexilis*	H 30-40' x 15-30' W; upright form with good vigor; handsome soft blue-green needles. Cultivars: **'Vanderwolf's', 'Columnaris'**

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Spruce	
Colorado Blue Spruce *Picea pungens var. glauca*	H 30-40' x 15-20' W; blue stiff needles; dense pyramidal growth; use as specimen, or in groupings; prefers rich, well drained evenly moist soil; full sun; best mulched and protected from hot winds; Cultivars: **'Bakeri'**, **'Hoopsi'**, **'Baby Blue'**
Norway Spruce *Picea abies*	H 50-60' x 20-30' W; medium to fast growth rate; dark green foliage; planting in full sun with moist soil is best; can tolerate heat better than *Picea pungens;* Cultivars; **'Acrocona'**, **'Pendula'**
Oriental Spruce *Picea orientalis*	H 30-40' x 15-20' W; Graceful, refined, pyramidal habit with horizontal branching; needles short with medium-fine texture; prefers evenly moist soil; size and form vary with cultivar: **'Green Knight'**, **'Gowdy'**, **'Atrovirens'**
Serbian Spruce *Picea omorika*	H 30 -40' x 15-20' W; Narrow pyramidal habit that can have ascending or drooping branches depending on cultivar; noted for its outstanding foliage; prefers evenly moist soil; excellent spruce for the Midwest; Cultivars: **'Riverside'**, **'Bruns'**, **'Deer Run'**
White Spruce *Picea glauca*	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: **'Densata'** (H 20-40'), slower growing and denser than species, also called **Black Hills Spruce**.

Works cited:

- Dirr, Michael A. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants: Their Identification, Ornamental Characteristics, Culture, Propagation and Uses.* Stipes Pub. L.L.C. 2009 (Sixth Edition)

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)
- Cottonless Cottonwood (insect and disease, weak wood)
- European White Birch (insect)
- White and Green Ash (Emerald Ash Borer)
- Lombardy Poplar (short lived)
- Scotch Pine (disease)
- Siberian Elm (weak wood)
- Silver Maple (weak wood)
- Silver Poplar (weak wood)
- Willow (weak wooded and canker
- Ornamental Pear, 'Bradford' (weak-wooded and invasive)

Plant with Caution

- Linden (attracts Japanese Beetles)
- Pin Oak (Iron Chlorosis)
- Red Maple (weak wood, sunscald, overplanted)
- Red & Silver Maple Cross – *Acer x freemanii* (weak wood)
- Spruce (extreme heat & drought intolerance)
- Sycamore – *Plantanus occidentalis* (anthracnose)

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We Answer Lawn and Garden Questions

(Revised – 2020)

Published by the Johnson County Extension Master Gardeners, a volunteer
Program of K-State Research and Extension, Johnson County