

OHIO GARDENER

OHIO'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

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**TREES FOR
URBAN AREAS**
Try these tough-as-
nails trees
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Selected **Trees for Urban Settings**

Selecting the right tree for a particular place can avoid costly disappointments later. These trees can withstand the rigors of the urban landscape.

Story & Photography
By Scott A. Zanon

About 75 percent of us live in cities and towns (urban settings), and we can act individually to improve our natural environment through the planting and care of trees on our own streets and properties.

Urban trees offer an important link for connecting urban populations with natural resources.

Here are some of the many benefits of trees: They reduce air pollution, provide oxygen, combat the greenhouse effect, conserve water and reduce soil erosion, save energy, modify local climate, increase economic stability, reduce noise pollution, help prevent water pollution, create wildlife and plant diversity, create screens, provide wood and increase property values.

Most trees will sustain themselves only if they are cared for and maintained by communities of people. The selected trees for urban settings below are particularly resilient and tough — tolerant of extreme temperatures, soil compaction, imported insects and diseases, air pollution, stress and an occasional drought, flood or ice storm.

Here are 10 recommendations to consider. Selecting the right tree for a particular place can avoid costly disappointments later. Visiting a local public garden or nursery is also a great way to learn about all the different species that are available and being grown locally.

▲ **Panicked Goldenraintree, Varnish Tree**
(*Koelreuteria paniculata*)

Zones: 5-9

Mature size: 30 feet tall and wide

This medium ornamental or shade tree is unrivaled for yellow flowers during early summer and its urban tolerance. They make excellent street trees. Surprisingly consistent fall colors of yellow to orange. It was selected as the 2011 Society of Municipal Arborists tree of the year.

Ginkgo, Maidenhair Tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)

Zones: 4-9

Mature size: 60-80 feet tall; 40-60 feet wide

An excellent large shade and ornamental tree that is very urban tolerant and boldly textured. Be patient as it will evolve into a spectacular specimen or focal point tree. It has stunning yellow fall color, and is a gymnosperm, making it one of the oldest trees growing on earth. It is highly recommended that you purchase and plant the non-fruiting male species only.

Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioica*)

Zones: 4-8

Mature size: 60-75 feet tall; 40-50 feet wide

A choice large tree with semi-filtered shade and a beautiful bold winter canopy. Older trees are majestic and handsome. It can get somewhat dirty with the pods and leaflets. Prune only in winter or early spring. This tree is dioecious so plant the male cultivars as they do not fruit. It is tolerant to heat, drought and cold.

Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*)

Zones: 5-8

Mature size: 70 feet tall; 25 feet wide

This large, stately, deciduous conifer exhibits a distinct conical form. It is a lovely specimen and ornamental tree excelling in groves, and along streams and lakes. It also makes a very effective screen. Plant it in an area large enough to accommodate its size. The bark is red-brown in youth and then becomes darker, fissured and exfoliating in narrow strips. It has a medium-fast growth rate with cinnamon-brown fall color.

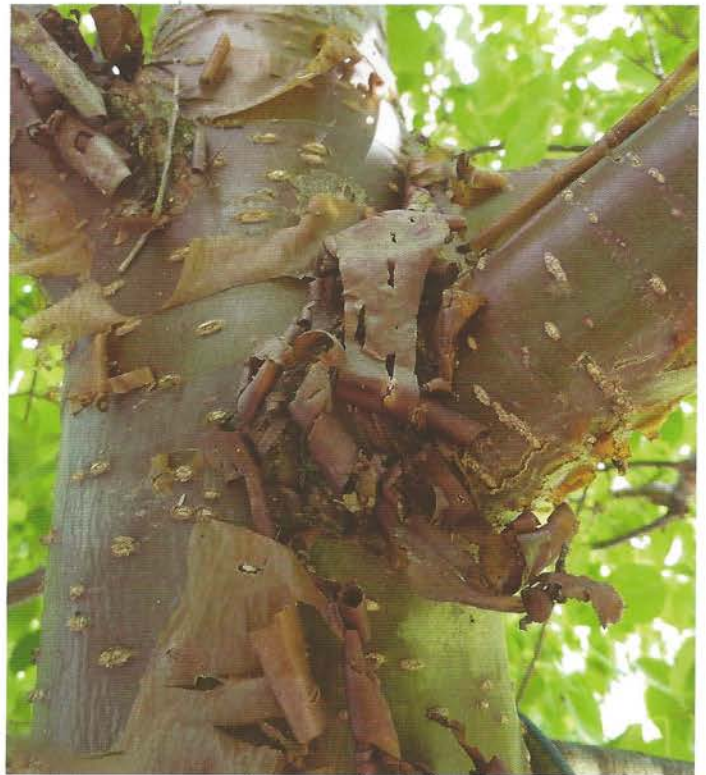


▲ Sawtooth Oak (*Quercus acutissima*)

Zones: 4-8

Mature size: 40-50 feet tall and wide

This is a handsome, clean-foliaged, large shade tree. The new leaves emerge bright yellow in the spring and exude a radiant glow to entire tree. It is another underutilized tree in the landscape, and it can be a prolific bearer of acorns. In November, the fall color is a clear to golden yellow. It transplants more easily than most oaks, too.



▲ Pekin Lilac, Peking Lilac, Chinese Tree Lilac (*Syringa pekinensis*)

Zones: 3-7

Mature size: 15-20 feet tall; 10-15 feet wide

This is a small tree form lilac that can be used in the landscape. Compared to Japanese tree lilac (*S. reticulata*), it exhibits greater heat tolerance, flowers earlier and has a finer texture because of its smaller leaves and stems. It exhibits a very nice winter bark that is smooth and copper-colored with peeling and flaking in sheets. Cherry-like prominent horizontal lenticels add to the ornamental value, as do the fragrant, creamy white long panicles in early summer.

▲ Persian Parrotia, Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*)

Zones: 4-8

Mature size: 30 feet tall; 20 feet wide

This one of the best specimen trees for foliage, bark and pest resistance. This is an outstanding small ornamental tree with few rivals. It is typically low branched, but there are tree forms. Bark exfoliates on older trunks exposing a mosaic of gray, brown, white and green. Fall colors of yellow to orange to scarlet are outstanding. It was selected as the 2014 Society of Municipal Arborists tree of the year.

Common Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

Zones: 4-9

Mature size: 50-70 feet tall; 20-30 feet wide

This large, deciduous conifer is an upright, stately pyramidal tree. Use it as a focal point or specimen. It is superb in exceptionally moist areas, but showing its versatility, it is also dry site capable. Some chlorosis may occur in high pH soils. Bark is red-brown with some exfoliation and the fall color has shades of russet, orange and bronze.



▲ 'Frontier' Elm (*Ulmus x 'Frontier'*)

Zones: 5-8

Mature size: 40 feet tall; 30 feet wide

A cross between *U. carpinifolia* (smooth) and *U. parvifolia* (lacebark) elms, this exciting medium tree may be blazing a trail for elms in the urban landscape. It has good vigor, tolerates poor soils, grows fast but does not get big, has small leaves and no seeds, is resistant of insect and disease problems, and has outstanding long fall color.

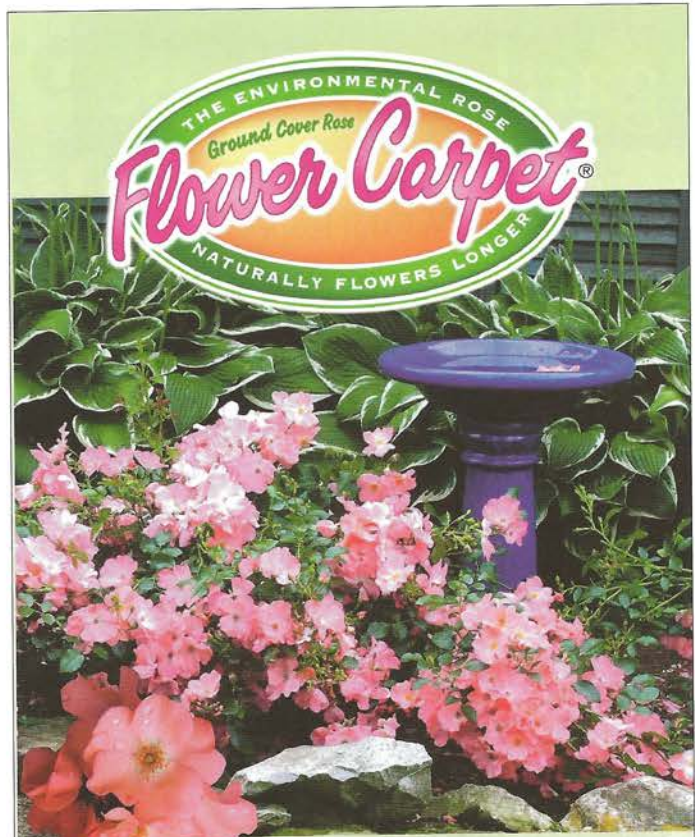
Japanese Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)

Mature size: 5-8

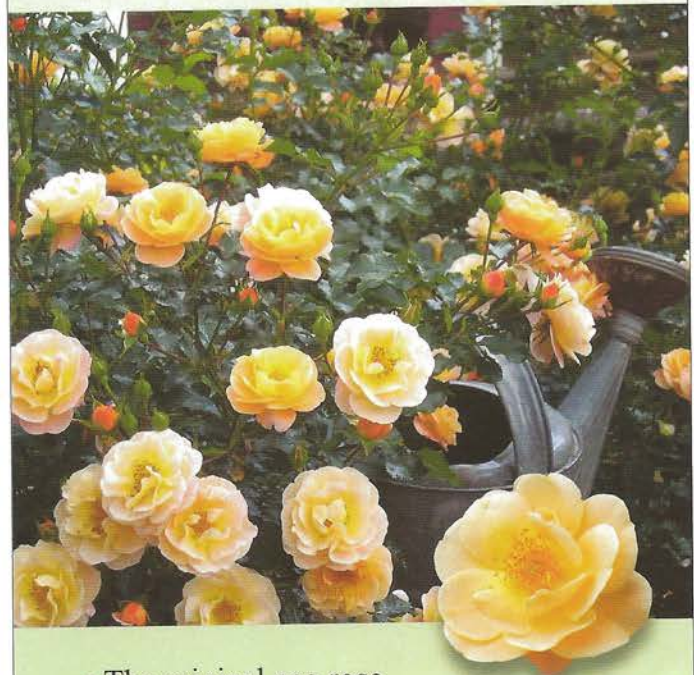
Mature size: 60 feet tall and wide

Here is a handsome large shade tree with a vase shape, rapid growth and stately looks. Other ornamental assets include the foliage, fine texture and attractive bark. Bark is red-brown and cherry-like in youth turning to gray-brown with some exfoliation at maturity. Fall color is yellow-orange-brown with occasional hues of red-purple. Give it room to grow. ✂

Scott Zanon is the author of *Landscaping with Trees in the Midwest: A Guide for Residential and Commercial Properties and Desirable Trees for the Midwest*. Visit statebystategardening.com/bookstore to learn more about or purchase these books.



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