

# Akron Beacon Journal

## Author urges choosing the right tree for your yard

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*Nyssa sylvatica* (Black Tupelo) from the book *Landscaping with Trees in the Midwest* by Scott Zanon.

You wouldn't buy a crib and expect your kid to sleep in it till he's 18.

So why would you plant a dawn redwood 6 feet from your house?

Yet Scott Zanon sees that kind of heedlessness in landscaping all the time. That's why he's written *Landscaping with Trees in the Midwest*, a book intended to help readers in our region choose trees that will thrive and enhance their properties.

It's all about putting the right tree in the right place, Zanon said.

That dawn redwood, for example, might grow to be 100 feet tall and 25 feet wide. Plant it too close to your front door, and in a few years you'll have to hack your way out.

Zanon's interest in tree selection was sharpened when he chaired the restoration of Ohio State University's Scarlet Golf Course, a project that involved removing a lot of overgrown and ill-suited trees and replacing them with more appropriate choices. Although he makes a living selling automated

external defibrillators (AEDs), he holds degrees in agronomy and horticulture from the university and said he's never lost his passion for plants.

When he researched the best replacement trees for the golf course, he discovered a dearth of good resources on the subject. Surprisingly few books and articles included photos to give the reader a full idea of what the trees look like, he said.

That's what he set out to provide in *Landscaping with Trees in the Midwest*. The book profiles 65 trees Zanon considers desirable in our area, including photos of the mature trees and close-ups of noteworthy features such as flowers, leaves or bark.

Zanon gives readers the essential facts about each tree — how big it will get, how fast it will grow, what sun and soil conditions it requires, and other important considerations.

They're the kinds of things you need to know before you dig the planting hole, Zanon said.

"To choose the correct tree, you have to work backward," he said. You need to consider how tall and wide the tree will get when it's mature, how much sunlight the site gets and how wet or dry the site is. You also need to know your hardiness zone (check the U.S. Department of Agriculture's hardiness zone map, found online and in most gardening books) and your soil's pH level (a measure of acidity or alkalinity that can be determined by a soil test).

Zanon said he has a hard time choosing his own favorites, but he managed to identify a few:

- Black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*), a shade tree that thrives in acidic soil and produces brilliant fall color.
- Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*), a small tree with year-round appeal, including its striking, peeling bark.
- Common baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*), a stately conifer that does well in both dry and wet sites and turns an attractive russet color in the fall before dropping its needles for winter.

- Persian parrotia (*Parrotia persica*), another small tree with interesting, mottled bark and leaves that change through the season from purplish to dark green to a variety of fall colors. “Really one of my favorites,” he said.

He’s also partial to the huge ash that grows in the middle of his patio in the Columbus suburb of Upper Arlington, which prompts him to hire an arborist to inject it with insecticide every other year in a so-far-successful effort to prevent infestation by the destructive emerald ash borer. He’s less enamored of his American sweetgum, which in spring has him filling bags and bags with “all the damn gum balls.”

Whatever tree you choose for your own yard, care for it properly, Zanon urged.

“There’s really no such thing as a no-maintenance tree,” he said. All trees need to be babied a bit for the first few years, including watering in dry periods.

And if a tree is important to you, as Zanon’s ash is to him, hire a certified arborist to care for it, he said. You can find certified arborists on the International Society of Arboriculture’s website, [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com).

Zanon believes it’s worth taking the time to match the tree to the site. Trees represent a significant investment, both financial and emotional, and it’s better to make the right choice in the beginning than to deal with the consequences.

His *Landscaping with Trees in the Midwest* is published by Ohio University Press and is priced at \$26.95 in paperback. It’s available from bookstores and online booksellers, and can also be ordered from the publisher at [www.ohioswallow.com](http://www.ohioswallow.com).

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