

There are many factors to consider when selecting trees. What might work well at one location in your community may not be appropriate at another.

Site Evaluation

Recommended species lists can help you get started, but before making final decisions take the time to evaluate several conditions specific to each site.

- **Soil Conditions and Soil Type** – clay, loam, sandy, and pH.
- **Hardiness zone** – determine your zone at <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov>.
- **Soil Moisture** – wet, medium or dry.
- **Sun Exposure** – sunlight, partial shade, or full shade.
- **Available Space** – both below ground and above ground, including proximity to buildings, overhead power lines, underground utilities, and other trees.
- **Species Diversity** – consider what species are already on the site and avoid planting too many trees of any one species.

Project and Design Goals

In addition to site conditions, you'll need to consider which plant attributes meet the goals of your project.

- **Tree size** – small (under 25 feet), medium (25-40 feet), or large (over 40 feet.) In tree-planting designs, the primary consideration is plant size – how large the tree will be when it reaches maturity. Give the tree enough room to attain its mature size, both above and below ground. When the planting space is narrow, a columnar tree variety might be your answer. Also pay attention to utility lines.
- **Color** – foliage color, flower color, and stem color
- **Texture** – fine-textured (usually smaller leaves) to coarse-textured (usually larger leaves)



- **Form** – branches create a shape for the tree that make it appear vase-like, round, columnar, or oval
- **Deciduous vs. Evergreen** – Deciduous trees lose their leaves or needles in the fall and evergreens retain their needles and stay green throughout the winter. Normally, only deciduous trees should be used in street tree projects. They can be pruned to maintain needed clearances, can be adapted to a narrow planting right-of-way, and can create a desirable canopy effect. Keep all trees clear of intersections to permit visibility. Consult your local ordinance for the distance required in your community. Evergreens are typically used to screen undesirable views, provide winter interest, or for windbreaks.
- **Resistance to Stressors and Other Threats** – Be aware of plant diseases, insects, and conditions that affect certain species. Both Iowa and Illinois have identified threats in their Forest Health Highlights report. Visit <http://fhm.fs.fed.us> to see your state's latest report.
- **Tree Debris** – Will seeds or tree litter be a problem on the street or high traffic areas?

Recommended Trees for Iowa and Illinois	
SHADE TREES on the west and east sides of homes and buildings help save energy and air conditioning expense in the summer. Large trees will provide more energy-saving benefit than smaller, ornamental trees.	WINDBREAKS of evergreens (and some deciduous trees) on the north and west sides of homes and buildings will help save on heating energy and costs in the winter.
Oaks (<i>Quercus</i>) The bur oak is Iowa's state tree, and the white oak is Illinois'. These large, majestic trees provide good shade, rich fall color, and food for wildlife. Consider white oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>), swamp white oak (<i>Quercus bicolor</i>), bur oak (<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>), and red oak (<i>Quercus rubra</i> .)	White Pine (<i>Pinus strobus</i>) Hardy and fast growing, with mature height of 100+ feet.
Honey Locust (<i>Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis</i>) Provides filtered shade and minimal raking.	Douglas Fir (<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>) Fast growing to 80 feet tall, noble appearance.
Hackberry (<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>) Dependable shade tree, tolerant of urban soils.	White Fir (<i>Abies concolor</i>) (Also called Concolor Fir) Good form and soft, silvery-blue needles. Needs well-drained soil.
Ginkgo (<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>) Unusual fan-shaped leaves; green in summer, bright yellow in fall. (Not native to Iowa or Illinois.)	Norway Spruce (<i>Picea abies</i>) Very hardy. Dark green needles with showy, 7-inch cones.
Kentucky Coffee Tree (<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>) This native tree provides interest in all seasons.	White Spruce (<i>Picea glauca</i>) Prefers moist, sandy soil. Needles bluish-green, bark is silver gray.
Ohio Buckeye (<i>Aesculus glabra</i>) Interesting fruit and bright orange fall color.	Eastern Red Cedar (<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>) Hardy tree, grows to 40 feet. Great for feeding birds and squirrels.
London Planetree (<i>Platanus x acerifolia</i>) Very large tree with large leaves provides dense shade. Peeling bark creates visual interest in the winter.	Arborvitae (<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>) Soft, dark green fan-shaped needles. Easy to grow and provides quick screening.
River Birch (<i>Betula nigra</i>) Peeling, cinnamon-colored bark is attractive year-round. Often grow with multiple trunks. Tolerant of wet sites.	Eastern Hemlock (<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>) Can be grown as a single tree or maintained as a hedge.
Tuliptree (<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>) Tall-growing tree with large, tulip-like flowers in spring and tulip-shaped leaves.	Serbian Spruce (<i>Picea omorika</i>) Slower growing, with a graceful attractive form. Prefers well-drained soils.
American Linden (<i>Tilia americana</i>) (Also known as Basswood.) Large tree with dense shade and aromatic fruit in summer.	European or Common Larch (<i>Larix decidua</i>) A deciduous conifer – needles turn golden tan in fall, then drop off. Fast growing.

For additional tree suggestions for communities, contact Trees Forever, your state's DNR urban forester or your local extension service. **Remember, recommended tree lists are suggestions and are ever-changing. Be certain that the trees you choose meet the environmental and design requirements of your site.**

Join Trees Forever on its mission to plant and care for trees and the environment by empowering people, building community and promoting stewardship.

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