

## **TREES FOR VERMONT COMMUNITIES**

*Urban trees are often located in sites that are much less suitable for tree growth than native forests. As a result, tree selection is an important investment decision. To give your new tree(s) the best chance for long-term survival, proper selection of tree species and planting site is crucial. Plan carefully to ensure that the “right tree” is established in the “right place,” otherwise, the tree can outgrow a site, damage foundations, patios and sidewalks, or be susceptible to diseases and insect infestations. Before you determine which tree you want to plant, consider the following questions:*

- What is the purpose and use of the planting?
- What are the site conditions above and below ground?
- What type of maintenance will be required?
- What is the best tree species for long-term success?

*Rarely will you find the perfect tree that will fit an entire list of selected criteria, yet answering these important questions can avoid many unforeseen pitfalls. A community’s green infrastructure is the only infrastructure that will increase in value over time if the “right trees” are put in the “right place.” This is a two-part article on selecting trees for your community. This first part will focus on specific criteria for the town green and highlight some trees for larger greenspaces. Next month, we’ll offer guidelines for selecting trees to be planted in downtown areas with more confined growing spaces, such as along Main Street or in parking lots.*

### **PART 1: TREES FOR TOWN GREENS**

Vermont is known for its beautiful town greens. Trees on the town green shade us during community events, provide us with clean air and clean water, and habitat for wildlife in our town centers. Trees on our greens or in our parks even make us safer by calming traffic. But even in the town green, where rooting space and infrastructure conflicts are less common, trees encounter a host of conditions that are not found in the natural forest. Here are some things to keep in mind when choosing what and where to plant on the town green.

- Does your community store snow on the town green? If so, depending on the drainage flow, you may want to select a salt-tolerant species, even if the planting site is not near a paved road.
- Consider the use of your town green. Does your community allow vehicles on the green, making compaction an even greater concern? Do you need a wide open green space for community gatherings?
- Consider clustering trees rather than planting individual trees or rows of trees. Groupings can be easier to maintain and create their own small habitat.
- Help restore your town green’s canopy. If there are no overhead conflicts, plant large shade trees. Your community will reap greater benefits.

## RECOMMENDED TREES FOR LARGE TOWN GREENSPACES

The table below can help you select a few different species that match your needs and site conditions. It is not a complete list of all potential species. For a more complete guide to the process of tree species selection, visit <http://orb.at.ufl.edu/TREES/index.html>. To receive more information on site assessment, recommended tree species or after care information, contact Kate Forrer, Urban and Community Outreach Specialist, Vermont Urban and Community Forestry Program, University of Vermont Extension, by phone at 802/223-2389, ext 25, or visit [www.vtcommunityforestry.org](http://www.vtcommunityforestry.org).

*Kate Forrer, Urban and Community Outreach Specialist, UVM Extension*

Hardiness Zone	Common Name Scientific Name	Mature Height	Tolerance To				Ornamental Features	Indigenous to Vt.	Remarks
			Drought	Poor Drainage	Salt	Shade			
3	Green Ash <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	L	H	H	H	M	Fall foliage	Y	Susceptible to Emerald Ash Borer; should be planted in limited numbers. There are several cultivars available, including Marshall's Seedless
3	White Ash <i>Fraxinus Americana</i>	L	M	M	H	M	Fall foliage	Y	Susceptible to Emerald Ash Borer; should be planted in limited numbers. There are several cultivars available.
4	European Beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	L	M	M	L	H	Winter Interest, fall foliage	N	Dark purple foliage turns golden bronze in fall.
2	American Elm 'Princeton' <i>Ulmus Americana</i>	L	H	H	H	M	Winter interest, fall foliage	N	This cultivar appears to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease; several others are also available. Several hybrids also show promise.
3	Red Maple <i>Acer rubrum</i>	L	M	H	L	M	Fall foliage	Y	There are several cultivars available.
3	Sugar Maple <i>Acer saccharum</i>	L	M	L	L	H	Fall foliage	Y	There are several cultivars available.
4	Catalpa <i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	L	H	H	M	M	Showy flowers		Excessive leaf and seed litter.
3	Swamp White Oak <i>Quercus bicolor</i>	L	M	H	M	M		Y	
4	Northern Red Oak <i>Quercus rubra</i>	L	H	L	H	L	Fall foliage	Y	
3	Bur Oak <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	L	H	M	M	M	Winter Interest	Y	
4	Pin Oak <i>Quercus palustris</i>	L	M	H	L	L	Fall foliage, pyramidal form	N	Low tolerance for alkaline soils.
3 / 4	Serviceberry <i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	S	M	L	M	H	Winter interest, flowers and fall foliage	Y	There are several cultivars available.
4	Hophornbeam <i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	M	H	M	L	H	Winter interest and wildlife food	Y	
3	Balsam Fir <i>Abies balsamea</i>	L	M	M	L	M			
3	Colorado Blue Spruce <i>Picea pungens</i>	L	M	M	L	M		N	Susceptible to <i>Cytospora kunzei</i> , which causes spruce canker.

Key: Mature Height (total height of a typical tree at maturity), S=<30 feet; M=30-50 feet; L=>50 feet. Tolerances (indicates the ability of the species to withstand drought, poor drainage, salt and shade), L=Low, M=Medium, H=High.

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