



Increasing Tree Diversity in Chicago's Landscape

Plant Native Non-Invasive Urban Tolerant Trees

Chicago Top-10 Trees



American Sweetgum
(*Liquidambar styraciflua*)

A large upright pyramidal tree, native to Illinois, that can reach 75 feet in height. The sweetgum tree earns its name from its sweet "gummy" sap. The tree has star shaped leaves which turn a brilliant orange to purplish red in the fall.



Village Green Zelkova
(*Zelkova serrata* 'Village Green')

In the elm family, the Village Green Zelkova typically grows to 50-60' tall with a spreading, upright vase-shaped crown. Performs well on City streets. In older trees, the bark exfoliates in patches exposing an attractive orangish inner bark.



Ginkgo / Maidenhair Tree
(*Ginkgo biloba*)

A good urban tree because of its ability to tolerate drought, heat, confined and poor soils. Grows slowly at first but once established is vigorous and can reach 100' tall! Ginkgos have survived for millions of years.



Sassafras
(*Sassafras albidum*)

A native, medium sized tree with multiple shapes (polymorphic) of leaves, which turn a scarlet purple in the fall. Prefers moist acidic soil in a sunny location but will also grow in rocky soil. The traditionally the roots are used to make root beer.



Shingle Oak
(*Quercus imbricaria*)

Shingle oak grows to a height of 65-80 feet. Slow growing tree found in moist well drained soils, but also tolerant of city conditions. The shingle oak was once widespread in Chicago, but was harvested extensively for making roofing shingles and is no longer common.



Ironwood
(*Ostrya virginiana*)

A small to medium sized slow growing tree, reaching 35 feet in height. The fruit looks like the hops used in beer, hence the alternate common name of hophornbeam. Leaves are strikingly serrate like the teeth of a wicked-looking saw and the bark is coarsely broken into narrow strips.



Nannyberry
(*Viburnum lentago*)

With showy flowers and delicious fruit, nannyberry can reach 25 feet high. Pleasing in a naturalistic planting, this tree will tolerate full sun or partial shade and rarely requires pruning. Its blue black berry-like drupes, often persist into winter and are especially popular with birds.



American Basswood
(*Tilia americana*)

Also known as the American linden, this tree can grow up to 80 feet in height and is best suited to parks and wide boulevards with ample rooting space. Small yellow, fragrant flowers appear in June. The basswood's heart shaped leaves are toothed and have a golden fall color.



London planetree
(*Platanus x acerifolia*)

A magnificent tree that can reach 90 feet in height, the planetree should be planted on larger sites. Can well tolerate high alkaline soils common to Chicago. The leaf is similar to a maple leaf, but the real eye-catching characteristic of the planetree is its cream, olive, light brown bark.



Patriot American Elm
(*Ulmus Patriot*)

American elm crossed with a Chinese elm to produce a hybrid elm resistant to Dutch elm disease. Fast growing medium size tree, quickly reaching 45 feet in height. Tolerates alkaline soils well and may finally offer a disease resistant American elm replacement in the urban landscape.

Photo Credit: Gary Kling/University of Illinois, Robert H. Mohlenbrock © USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS, 1989. Midwest wetland flora: Paul Wray, Iowa State University, Missouri Botanical Garden PlantFinder



Chicago's Top-10 Trees are selected annually to highlight lesser known trees suitable for planting in USDA Hardiness Zone 5 and tolerant of urban conditions.