

# MESSENGER-INQUIRER



**October 29, 2022**

## **Select a Diversity of Trees for the Landscape**

Fall is the best time to plant trees. When selecting a tree, consider its characteristics such as flowers, fruits, foliage color, and bark. Also, consider the needed growing environment. Keep in mind that including a diversity of trees slows down the buildup of plant pests. Several small to medium trees suitable for this area are listed below.

Cornelian cherry dogwood (*Cornus mas*) is a broad tree that reaches 15 to 25 feet tall with a spread of 15 to 20 feet. Keep an eye on it in March to see the small .75-inch flowers which cover the tree with a yellow glow. Bees also appreciate the early flowers. Bright red fruits are produced in summer. The beautiful grayish-brown bark exfoliates on older branches. It prefers to grow in well-drained soil and can grow in partial shade to full sun.

American hornbeam or musclewood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), has interesting, smooth, gray bark that looks like flexed muscles. This slow-growing, medium-sized tree reaches 20 to 30 feet tall and wide. It can be found as a large shrub if not trained in the nursery to a single-trunk tree. Fall color varies from yellow to orange. It can tolerate wet sites but also grows in drier locations. Musclewood tolerates some shade.

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Amur maackia (*Maackia amurensis*) is a medium tree reaching 20 to 30 feet tall and wide. The bark becomes attractive with maturity as it peels. The dull white flowers are produced on 4- to 6-inch upright racemes in June and July. The 2- to 3-inch long fruit are brown. The fall color is dull. It requires well-drained soil in a sunny location. In addition, this tree is drought tolerant, especially once established.

Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) is a beautiful, spring flowering tree. The half-inch long, reddish-purple flowers are produced on the branches before the leaves appear. Flowers are often found on the trunk too. Attractive, brown, flat seed pods often stay on the tree until the following spring. The redbud grows well in sun or shade and is best used as an understory tree. The soil should be well drained. Verticillium wilt and borers are sometimes a problem with redbuds, especially on sites with a lot of stress factors. Redbud is bee friendly too and a native tree.

Kousa dogwood (*Cornus kousa*) is a small to medium tree reaching 20 to 30 feet tall and 15 to 20 feet wide. It has flowers almost like those of the flowering dogwood. The true flowers are small, yellow clusters at the center of what is generally referred to as a single flower. The white part is called the bract, which is a modified leaf. The bract of the kousa dogwood is more pointed than that of the flowering dogwood.

In addition, the kousa dogwood produces leaves first and then flowers in June. The flowering dogwood blooms in April before the foliage appears. The fruit of the kousa dogwood is about 1 inch in diameter and looks like a reddish raspberry. It can be trained to a single trunk or left as a multi-stemmed tree. In the fall, the leaves turn from green to reddish-purple or

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scarlet. The bark becomes multicolored with areas of gray to tan to brown on older wood. It is resistant to the dogwood anthracnose disease which affects the flowering dogwoods.

Carolina silverbell, (*Halesia carolina*,) grows 30 feet tall with attractive bark. It can reach 80 feet tall over time if it likes its growing conditions. Translucent white, one-inch flowers hang from the branches in May. An interesting star-shaped, papery fruit is produced. As the tree gets older, the bark becomes more attractive with gray to brown to black color combinations. For best results, this tree, which is native to Kentucky, should be grown in partial shade.

Trident maple (*Acer buergeranum*) has bark on older trunks that is gray, brown, and orange-toned and develops a flaking, scaly characteristic. This slow to medium-growing tree can reach 20 to 30 feet in height with a similar spread at maturity. The shape of the tree is an oval to rounded outline. Leaf shape is three-lobed, resembling a three-pronged pitchfork, hence the name trident maple. Fall leaf color can range from yellow to orange to red.

Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) is a native tree of Kentucky. You may have seen this tree along the side of the road on I 165 going south. It can reach a height of 25 to 30 feet tall. The small, white flowers open in June and look like upside-down urns. These fragrant flowers hang from 8 to 10 inches long with slightly drooping stems. They persist as clusters of small, brown fruit until late winter. The foliage is shiny green all summer. Sourwood is one of the best trees with red fall color among the native trees. The bark is grayish-brown to brown in color. This is a good tree for well-drained, slightly acidic soil.

For more information about trees for the landscape, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or [annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu](mailto:annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu). “Trees with Minimal Insect and Disease Problems for Kentucky Landscapes,” HO-94, is available at the

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local office or at <http://www2.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/ho/ho94/ho94.pdf> . This publication includes important notes to consider about the different tree species. Also, a table of problematic tree species is provided.

## **Annette's Tip:**

To find the suggested trees, contact local nurseries, garden centers, and landscape architects. A plant guide from KY wholesale producers is searchable at <http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/plant/plant-guide.html> .

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