

Trees to Avoid

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Q: I am planning to replace one of the trees in my yard and I am wondering if there are any trees I should avoid?

A: Fall is a good time to plant trees and shrubs as they can establish roots before it gets too cold and they will then be ready to take off and grow next spring before the extreme heat hits.

When shopping for trees there are a number of trees you should avoid either because they will grow too large for the space at hand, are very messy or are too thirsty. Here is a list of a few to avoid to prevent issues later.

The first on the list is the Eucalyptus, also known as Gum trees. Although some Eucalyptus trees can grow very quickly and quite tall, they are also known to be somewhat thirsty plants. Eucalyptus trees become stressed when they are not adequately watered. Stress leads to attack by pests like the Long-horned, Tortoise and Leaf-eating beetles and some Psyllids – like the Redgum Lerp Psyllid. They are also an extremely flammable tree so if you live in an area where fire danger is high you do not want this near your house.

Another commonly planted tree that should be avoided is the coast redwood, *Sequoia sempervirens*. You may be tempted by these inexpensive trees but they require a lot of water and cannot tolerate water stress during the dry summer months. Without lots of water the Redwood tops will dieback after a few years in the landscape. These trees also grow quite large and have invasive roots making it very difficult to plant anything under them and causing damage to sidewalks and building foundations.

If you are thinking of planting the beautiful *Robinia pseudoacacia*, or Black Locust, you might want to reconsider the choice of this tree for several reasons. Although this species can tolerate poor soil and little or no water, its roots are very aggressive and spread by suckers, which can pop up all over the garden. Additionally, the bark, leaves and seeds are poisonous if ingested.

Unless you have a lot of space and water the Cottonwood, Aspen and Poplar are not good choices. These trees have aggressive surface roots that crowd out other plants and can damage sewer lines and pop up sidewalks and driveways. The roots will also sucker if they are cut or damaged. Cottonwoods also produce a gum-like

sap which can be messy. *Betula pendula*, European White Birch, is the white trunk tree with interesting bark so commonly seen. This tree is a greedy consumer of water. Birch trees are susceptible to aphids that drip honeydew, making a mess. The Birch Borer attacks certain species of Birches leaving holes in the trunk and branches and causing leaves and branches to wilt and ooze.

Another tree with shallow and aggressive roots is the *Salix*, Willow. It is also a short-lived tree and its wood is brittle and weak. Because of its very low canopy and shallow root system, it is difficult to grow anything under it. Most species are susceptible to tent caterpillars, aphids, borers and spider mites.

Another tree to avoid is the *Ailanthus altissima*, Tree of Heaven. This tree is anything but heavenly. Its aggressive growth habit has negatively impacted native plants and wildlife all over the state. You can see the Tree of Heaven growing everywhere along roadsides and streams around the Redding area. It produces reddish brown seedpods that readily self-sow. Branches will also sprout from stumps and roots, making it very hard to control.

As with any plant you should consider your climate, soil, space, sunlight, and available irrigation water when deciding whether and where to plant a tree. A tree can be a lovely and important addition to a yard, however, be aware of any drawbacks with the selected tree species before you plant.