



Tree Species Selection for Your Yard



Last week's article about landscape trees addressed site selection for tree placement. This week's article will discuss selection of tree species.

It is very important to select tree species that are suitable for the site and intended purpose, such as shade, wind protection, privacy, aesthetics or architectural elements. Decide between a deciduous tree and evergreen tree. The choice depends on the function of the tree. Deciduous trees drop their leaves in winter and are a good choice for a tree planted for shade. Evergreen trees do not drop leaves in winter and would be a good choice for a tree planted for privacy.

Selection of a fruit or nut tree can provide spring flowers, autumn leaf color and a harvest for wildlife and humans.

Select trees adapted to the local climate. Some trees require summer irrigation, some of not. Avoid planting a species that is adapted to dry summer conditions in a highly irrigated site such as a lawn. Select tree species with genetic resistance to local common pest problems. Avoid selecting trees susceptible to root or crown rots. Inquire about pest resistance at local UC Cooperative Extension offices, retail nurseries, or ISA (International Society of Arboriculture) certified arborists prior to selection to aid in best tree selection. Mature trees located in parks, botanical gardens, arboreums, and private plantings can provide a realistic vision of a tree species and its characteristics.

The horticultural staff of the UC Davis Arboretum has identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested in the Arboretum - The Arboretum All-Stars. The Arboretum All-Stars are easy to grow, don't need a lot of water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants and support native birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California. Additional information about the Arboretum All-Stars can be found at http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx. There you will find a searchable database to help you pick a species for your location and a list of retailers that sell many of the species in the database.

There were two points about tree selection that was addressed in last week's article about site selection that are important enough that they bear repeating here: 1) Proper tree selection and placement of trees around utilities is important. Proper tree species selection can eliminate potential public safety hazards, reduce expenses by utilities, and improve the appearance of landscapes. 2) The understanding of what the eventual size of a tree at maturity will be should be factored in selecting a species. Many larger tree species will work for a few years in most yards, but people need to think 10 to 15 years ahead, or more. If you don't, you and your tree will suffer the consequences later.

Submitted by Nancy Mulligan, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County