

# NATIVE TREES

## For Gardeners In The Great Lakes Watershed



There are many reasons why native trees are important. First, take a breath of air. Then, walk in the woods and stand in awe at nature's beauty. Gaze in amazement at a flowering dogwood in late May. Enjoy the dappled shade of a stately black walnut tree in the heat of mid-summer. Delight in the brightly coloured leaves on the forest floor after the first sharp frost of autumn. Ponder the structure of a magnificent white oak, its elegant grey bark highlighted by a blanket of snow on the ground in coldest January. Now, thank a tree. For all of the above are the bounty of nature's woody plants, especially trees.

Let us say that you and I were somewhere in the Great Lakes watershed in the year 1700. Most of the region is inhabited, but the human denizens are few, and they are aboriginal. The region is pristine, most of it a mature, or climax, forest. The heart beats faster in exaltation at the sight of this natural cathedral.

Almost all of this magnificent panorama is either gone or threatened. We have cut down much of the original forest in the region. Yet we can do our part to redress the imbalance. Let's plant native trees in our own yards and gardens! ❁

In general, late fall (after the leaves have dropped) and early spring are the best times to plant a tree.

### PLANTING A TREE

1. Determine the best site for the tree. Factors to consider include: the mature size of the tree (make sure it won't interfere with overhead wires or other structures), the tree's soil preferences, the tree's sun or shade requirements, and the tree's rate of growth.
2. Dig a hole slightly larger than the root system of the tree.
3. If the tree has soil in a compact ball around the roots, plop it into the hole.
4. If the roots are bare, spread them out so that they grow out, away, and down from the trunk (to avoid interference later in life).
5. Fill the hole with the excavated soil, mixed with compost, and stamp the soil down firmly to eliminate air pockets.
6. The base of the tree should be at the same level as the soil around it.
7. Water well and regularly during the tree's first growing season.
8. Talk to, caress, love your tree!

Sources: Most nurseries sell trees and many will deliver and plant them for you. As well, you can propagate your own by collecting seeds from existing trees or taking cuttings. Contact your local councillor or city hall to find out if your municipality will provide a free native tree for your front yard—many do!

Planting trees  
is a gesture  
into the future,  
it is a hand held out  
to other generations.

*Mirabel Osler*  
A Gentle Plea for Chaos

### CAROLINIAN FOREST REGION AND THE GREAT LAKES WATERSHED

In southern Ontario, if one were to draw a line starting at about Sarnia, and tapering out east of Toronto along the shores of Lake Ontario, what is found south of that line is called the Carolinian, or Deciduous, Forest Region. It harbours species found either to the south, or to the mid-west, in the United States. The Great Lakes Watershed, as the name suggests, represents the drainage basin of the Great Lakes.

## A SELECTION OF NATIVE TREES FOR GARDENS IN THE GREAT LAKES WATERSHED

Size: **Very small:** up to 10 metres **Small:** up to 20 m **Medium:** up to 30 m **Large:** up to 40 m

Zone: **Canadian Hardiness Zone** ▲ (see References): numbers in brackets signify borderline hardiness **CAR: Carolinian species**

Name	Size	Zone	Soil, Site Requirements	Growth Rate	Strong Points
Alternate-leaf dogwood <i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	Very small	4	Most any soil, sun or shade	Fast	White flowers, fall colour, fruit, attracts birds
American beech <i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	Medium	4	Most any soil, sun or shade	Slow	Bluish-grey bark, edible nuts
Bitternut hickory <i>Carya cordiformis</i>	Medium	5	Most any soil, sun or shade	Medium	Stately outline
Black walnut <i>Juglans nigra</i>	Medium	5	Most any soil, sun	Fast	Walnuts, shade, stately outline, timber
Burr oak <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	Medium	(2) 3	Most any soil, sun	Slow	Stately outline, acorns, corky wings on branches
Eastern hemlock <i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Medium	4	Cool, moist soil, sun or shade	Medium	Conical shape, cones
Eastern white-cedar <i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	Small	3	Most any soil, sun	Medium	Columnar shape, nesting and food for birds
Red maple <i>Acer rubrum</i>	Medium	4	Most any soil, shade tolerant but prefers sun	Slow	Spring and fall colour
Red oak <i>Quercus rubra</i>	Medium	4	Most any soil, shade tolerant but prefers sun	Fast	Fall colour, stately outline, acorns
Sugar maple <i>Acer saccharum</i>	Large	4	Most any soil, shade tolerant but prefers sun	Medium	Stately tree, maple sugar, fall colour
White oak <i>Quercus alba</i>	Large	5	Slightly acid soil, sun	Slow	Fall colour, ridged bark, acorns
White pine <i>Pinus strobus</i>	Large	4	Slightly acid soil, prefers sun	Medium	Stately outline, Ontario provincial tree
* Black-gum <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> (CAR)	Small	5	Acid soil	Slow	Fall leaf colour (scarlet)
* Pawpaw <i>Asimina triloba</i> (CAR)	Very small	(5) 6	Most any soil, shade tolerant but prefers sun	Medium	Fruit, Large leaves
* Redbud <i>Cercis canadensis</i> (CAR)	Very small	(5) 6	Most any soil, sun	Fast	Pink flowers
* Striped maple <i>Acer pensylvanicum</i>	Very small	3	Acid	Slow	Striped bark, fall colour
* Tulip-tree <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> (CAR)	Large	5	Most any soil, sun	Fast	Showy greenish-yellow flowers, attractive leaf shape, related to magnolias
* White spruce <i>Picea glauca</i>	Medium	2	Slightly acid soil, shade tolerant but prefers sun	Medium	Columnar shape, cones

\* Not native to the Rouge Park.

### RECOMMENDED REFERENCES

*Manual of Showy Woody Landscape Plants* Michael A. Dirr. Champaign, Illinois: Stipes, 1982.

*Michigan Trees* Burton V. Barnes and Warren H. Wagner, Jr. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

*Native Trees of Canada* R. C. Hosie. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1990.

*Seeds of Woody Plants in the United States, Forest Service* U.S. Department of Agriculture. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1982.

*The Tree Book* Gerry Waldron and the Essex County Field-Naturalists Club. Windsor, Ontario: Project Green, 1998.

*Trees in Canada* John Laird Farrar. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1995.

*Wildflower: North America's Magazine of Wild Flora* Published quarterly by the North American Native Plant Society, Box 336, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2L7; (416) 924-6807.

▲ *Plant Hardiness Zones Map*: Published by Canada Department of Agriculture, Ottawa.

**Trees to Plant in Moist Areas:** pin oak, eastern hemlock; red maple; silver maple; white ash; white oak; eastern white-cedar

**Trees to Attract Birds for Food and/or Shelter:** eastern white pine; white, burr and red oak; white spruce; paper birch; American mountain ash; redbud; pin cherry; shagbark hickory; eastern hemlock

**A windbreak of evergreen trees** planted on the north side of a house will buffer against winter north winds and protect against some heat loss—up to 22% according to Landscape Ontario. Deciduous trees planted on the southeast or southwest sides of the house can reduce air-conditioning needs up to 75%.

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