

Shrubs and Small Trees – Plants in Need

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Why plant the small tree? Oh sure, most homeowners begrudgingly plant the token Flowering Dogwood or a Purple Leaf Plum at the corner of the house – and all too often much too close to the corner of the house! But, it is amazing to me, how many people will opt to plant an evergreen (or worse yet, a weeping evergreen) in the location where a small tree should be lovingly placed. I am also amazed (OK, perhaps I am easily amazed) at the boring uses most people have for the small tree. True, they often do look attractive planted at the corner of a building. But, why plant just one tree, when 3-5 trees could give a more interesting result that not only softens the corner of the home, but also provides depth. If it is money that is the limiting factor, consider planting younger, less expensive plants. Large shrubs often perform similar duties in the Garden and many can be limbed up to create the same impact as a small tree. *Cornus mas*, it is an excellent example, since the bark is often never appreciated when the limbs remain to the ground!

Some Uses

- The ornamental small tree or large shrub is also great when used as an allee, with 2 rows or 3 or more plants leading your eye or legs to a desired location. Allees of trees never fail to illicit a smile and make the smaller property appear much larger.
- Small trees and shrubs are also effective for producing shade. Granted, they are not going to cool a large house or patio. But, even a small shadow pool next to a patio can make us feel cooler.
- These plants create depth, and make a small garden room appear larger. The act of looking under or past a trunk or canopy creates an illusion of depth.
- They can provide an anchor to many planting schemes. Often, a bed of shrubs will appear to be floating and have no apparent reason for its shape or existence. A small tree will often resolve the problem. If a bedline sweeps outward to create a desired effect, but does not have a justifiable reason for its shape, a tree planted in the outward curve is often the solution.
- Small trees and large shrubs are often desirable for ornamental interest as well. They can provide seasonal color through flowers and fall color and interesting bark and outlines for winter interest.

When using small trees, remember, one tree is often a focal point. It is unique, and your eye often rests upon that tree and does not move. Thus, it is wise to put several trees at the corner of the house, and not just one. Two trees is obviously a pair, and will draw your eye between the two. If you are going to use a pair, and space permits, why not strengthen the design and use the before mentioned allee. Three trees, used in a triangulated manner, appear more ‘natural’; they surround the individual or create a

grove. The eye will most often perceive the effect, but will not recognize it as created or contrived!

Small trees are important for residential gardens since they are the proper size and scale for most homes. But, they should not replace shade trees. Also, keep in mind that what is often deemed a small tree, may not in fact be small! A small tree, by definition, grows to 20 to 30' in height and width. Paper Bark Maples (*Acer griseum*) slowly grow to 60' tall over 200+ years, and River Birches (*Betula nigra*) grow to 70' tall over 100 years. Obviously, if they are used in a small area, they will rapidly outgrow their space requirements!

Plants for Flower

Amelanchir x grandiflora – Downy Serviceberry

Calycanthus floridus – Sweetshrub

‘Athens’

‘Burgundy Spice’

Calycanthus x raulstoni ‘Hartlage Wine’ - Sweetshrub

Cercis canadensis – Eastern Redbud

‘Appalachia’ – Pink Flowers

‘Hearts of Gold’ – Golden foliage. Looks attractive when stooled or cut back to 12” annually.

Chionanthus retusus – Chinese Fringe Tree

Chionanthus virginicus – Fringetree

Clethra alnifolia ‘Ruby Spice’ – Pepperbush

‘Compacta’ or ‘Tom’s Compact’

‘Sixteen Candles’

Cornus florida – Flowering Dogwood

Cornus kousa – Chinese Dogwood

Cornus kousa x florida – The Stellar Dogwood

Aurora® – Rounded bracts, 20’x20’, vase shaped habit.

Ruth Ellen® – Resembling *Cornus florida*, 18’ tall, 22’ wide.

Stellar Pink® – Light pink flowers, 20’ tall by 19’ wide.

Stardust® – A lower mounding habit, 11’ tall by 19’ wide.

Franklinia alatamaha – Franklin Tree

Hydrangea arborescens ‘Annabelle’ – Smooth Hydrangea

‘Bella Anna’

‘White Dome’

Hydrangea paniculata ‘Limelight’ – Limelight Hydrangea
‘Bobo’
‘Unique’

Jasminum nudiflorum – Winter Jasmine

Lagerstroemia x ‘Natchez’ – Crapemyrtle

Magnolia grandiflora ‘Edith Bogue’
‘Brackens Brown Beauty’

Magnolia x soulangiana – Saucer Magnolia

Magnolia kobus var *stellata* – Star Magnolia
‘Rosea’

Magnolia virginiana – Sweetbay Magnolia

Oxydendron arboreum – Sourwood

Syringa vulgaris – Common Lilac

Syringa meyeri ‘Palibin’ – Meyer’s Lilac

Viburnum carlesii – Fragrant Viburnum

Plants for Fall Color

Itea virginica ‘Henry’s Garnet’ – Virginia Sweetspire

Parrotia persica – Persian Ironwood

Trees for Texture and Form

Acer palmatum – Japanese Maple

Poncirus trifoliata ‘Flying Dragon’ – Flying Dragon Hardy Orange

Trees for Bark

Acer griseum – Paperbark Maple –

Cornus sanguinea ‘Midwinter Fire’ – Bloodtwig Dogwood

Cornus sericea (*stolonifera*) ‘Baileyi’ – Redosier Dogwood
‘Flaviramea’

Heptacodium miconioides – Seven Son Flower

Ilex pedunculosa – Longstalk Holly

Ilex verticillata – Winterberry Holly
‘Red Sprite’
‘Winter Gold’

Salix alba ‘Britzensis’ – Coral Bark Willow

Stewartia koreana – Korean Stewartia

Stewartia pseudocamellia – Japanese Stewartia

Trees for Fruit

Asimina triloba – Pawpaw

Ilex pedunculosa – Longstalk Holly

Ilex verticillata – Winterberry Holly
‘Red Sprite’
‘Winter Gold’

Malus floribunda – Japanese Crabapple