



# **Recommended Trees for Plains Communities of Eastern Colorado**

*A Guide for Selecting, Planting, and Caring For Trees*



## Do Not Top Your Trees!



*Trees that have been topped may become hazardous and unsightly.*

[www.colostate.edu/Depts/CSFS](http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CSFS)



[www.coloradotrees.org](http://www.coloradotrees.org)



[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)



Avoid topping trees. Topping leads to:

- Starvation
- Shock
- Insects and diseases
- Weak limbs
- Rapid new growth
- Tree death
- Ugliness
- Increased maintenance costs

*Special thanks to the International Society of Arboriculture for providing details and drawings for this brochure.*

## Trees to avoid!

Selecting the right tree for the right place can help reduce the potential for catastrophic loss of trees by insects, disease or environmental factors. We can't control the weather, but we can use discernment in selecting trees to plant. A variety of tree species should be planted so no single species represents more than 10-15 percent of a community's total tree population. Many trees are not recommended because of brittle wood, susceptibility to insects and diseases, or their ability to spread in to native ecosystems and out-compete native species, while others simply do not grow well in our climate. The following is a list of tree species **NOT** recommended for the Eastern Plains of Colorado:

Species **NOT** recommended

**Austree** (*Salix alba x matsudana*)

**Aspen** (*Populus tremuloides*)

**Silver maple** (*Acer saccharinum*)

**Russian-olive** (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*)

**Tree-of-Heaven** (*Ailanthus altissima*)

**Mountain-ash** (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

**Tamarisk** (*Tamarix spp.*)

**Willows** (*Salix spp.*)

**Birches** (*Betula spp.*)

**Non-native hybrid poplars/cottonwoods** (*Populus spp.*)

**Siberian elm** (*Ulmus pumila*)

## Tree Selection

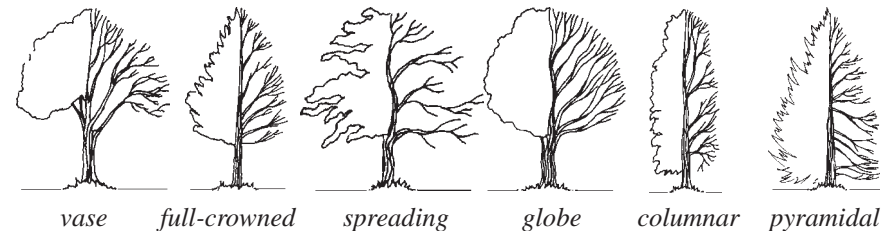
Tree selection is one of the most important investment decisions a home owner makes when landscaping a new home or replacing a tree lost to damage or disease. Most trees can outlive the people who plant them, therefore the impact of this decision is one that can influence a lifetime. Matching the tree to the site is critical; the following site and tree demands should be considered before buying and planting a tree.

### Site Considerations

- Available space above **and** below ground
- Water availability
- Drainage
- Soil texture and pH
- Sunlight levels/exposure
- Weather and other environmental factors

### Tree Considerations

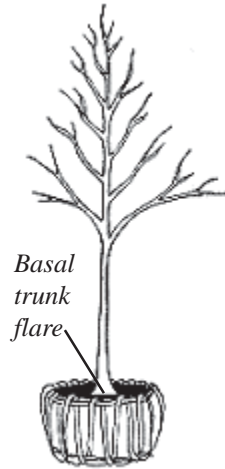
- Growth rate of the species selected
- Mature size
- Form
- Hardiness – ability of a plant to survive low temperatures
- Heat tolerance and drought tolerance
- Pest resistance
- Maintenance issues
- Native vs. non-native species



## Selecting Trees at the Nursery

When you buy a high-quality tree, plant it correctly, and treat it properly, you and your tree will benefit greatly for many years. When you buy a low-quality tree, you and your tree will have many costly problems even if you take great care in planting and maintenance. Consider the following when selecting a tree at the nursery:

- Tree should appear healthy. No discolored bark, wilted leaves, etc.
- Branches should be spaced evenly around the trunk
- Tree trunk should taper from a solid base, gradually becoming more slender towards the top.
- Tree foliage and branches should be distributed on upper 2/3 of tree.
- Tree should contain a central, dominant leader.
- Tree should be free from mechanical damage.
- Tree should be free from insects and diseases.
- Roots should not be girdling, circling or potbound.



## Tree Planting Tips

- Plant the top of the root ball slightly above ground level. The root collar (flare) must be visible one inch above final grade.
- Set root ball on **solid** ground and not on loose backfill in the hole; this will eliminate settling.
- Remove at least the top 1/2 of all wire and baskets from balled and burlapped trees and completely remove containers from containerized stock.
- Adding peat moss or manure to soil in the planting hole is **not** necessary. (Too much can cause a “potted tree” effect and restrict root growth.) Backfill hole with original soil.

## Small evergreens

(15 - 25 feet mature height)

### **Piñon\*** (*Pinus edulis*)

*Dense, bushy pine, short grayish-green needles, getting hit hard by Ips beetle in parts of State*

### **Bristlecone pine\*** (*Pinus aristata*)

*Bushy dark green needles, very slow growing*

### **Eastern red cedar\*** (*Juniperus virginiana*)

*Very hardy tree, excellent windbreak tree, green summer foliage, rusty brown in the winter*

### **Junipers, upright\*** (*Juniperus scopulorum*)

*Very hardy tree, excellent windbreak tree (includes Rocky Mountain juniper)*

**Serviceberry\*** (*Amelanchier spp.*)

*Small trees or large shrubs with showy white flowers and edible fruits*

**Gambel (scrub) oak\*** (*Quercus gambelii*)

*Native acorn-producing oak with great variability in size and shape*

**Japanese tree lilac\*** (*Syringa reticulata*)

*Creamy, white flower clusters with showy, dark bark*

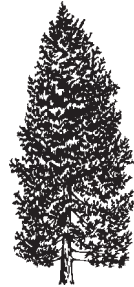
## Large Evergreens

(30 - 60 feet mature height)

Do not use as street trees!

**Colorado blue spruce\*** (*Picea pungens*)

*State tree, sharp stiff needles, color of needles range from bright green to silver blue*



Colorado blue spruce

**Austrian pine\*** (*Pinus nigra*)

*Long needle pine, works well in a windbreak*



White fir

**Concolor (white) fir** (*Abies concolor*)

*Long soft blue-green needles, plant in a protected site, shade tolerant*

**Scots pine\*** (*Pinus sylvestris*)

*Short needle pine, orange bark with age*

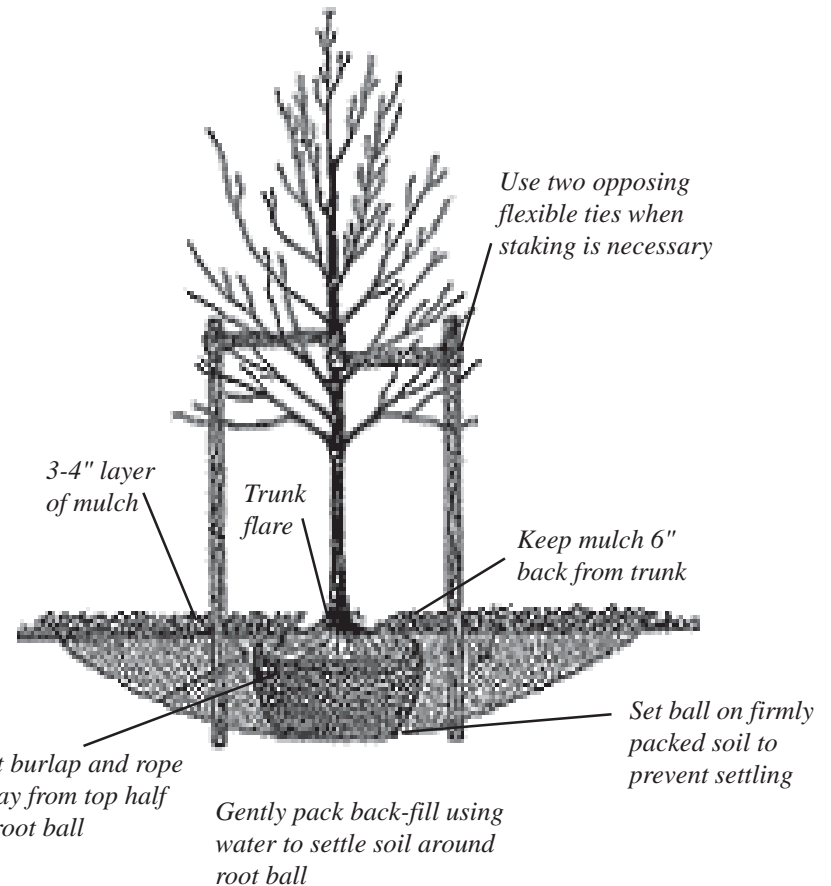


Ponderosa pine

**Ponderosa pine\*** (*Pinus ponderosa*)

*Long needle pine, native to Colorado, hardy tree*

- Do not fertilize at planting time.
- Optimum planting periods are from March 15 to June 15 and from September 1 to October 15.
- Use mulch 3–4 inches deep, pull back 6 inches from the trunk of the tree, and extend the mulch ring one foot beyond the root ball. This will protect roots, hold soil moisture, reduce weed growth, and provide a protective strip to eliminate mechanical damage from lawnmowers and weedeaters. Porous landscape cloth may be placed between the soil and the mulch. Do **not** use plastic. Keep grass and weeds out of mulched area as they compete for the same resources as your new tree.



- If necessary, stake tree properly to keep root ball from shifting. Main tree stem **must** be able to sway slightly; if it is too rigid, root growth, diameter of stem, and height growth will be adversely affected.
- Use wide straps for tying trees to stakes. Do **not** use wire, string, rope, or rubber hose around tree.
- Remove stakes and straps after roots are established, usually one or two growing seasons.
- Keep soil moist but not saturated.

## Tree Watering

The correct amount of water is the most important factor in ensuring proper tree establishment. Too much water can be as damaging to a newly planted tree as too little water, so be sure to periodically check soil moisture by examining the soil in the area of the roots. Follow these recommendations to help your tree establish in the landscape:

- **Water deeply and slowly.** Apply water so it moistens the critical root zone (from near the trunk of the tree to the dripline) to a depth of twelve inches. Methods for watering include a deep root fork or needle, soaker hose or soft spray wand. Apply water to many locations under the dripline. If a deep root fork or needle is used, insert the device no deeper than eight inches into the soil.
- **Consistent moisture is essential.** Maintaining **consistent** soil moisture allows for better root water absorption. Drought stressed or over-watered trees are more vulnerable to disease and insect infestations, as well as branch dieback.
- **When should I water?** Generally, water a newly planted tree every 3-5 days during the growing season, depending on weather and soil conditions. Remember that newly planted trees need water during dry periods in the winter months as well. Try to water at least once a month in the dormant season.

### Japanese Pagodatree\* (*Sophora japonica*)

*Rounded crown, olive green bark, abundant white flowers*

### Ohio Buckeye\* (*Aesculus glabra*)

*Very similar to horsechestnut with a bit smaller leaves that can occasionally scorch*

### Amur corktree\* (*Phellodendron amurense*)

*Round broad spreading tree, bark is cork like, leaves dark green on top and light green on bottom*

### Mayday tree (*Prunus padus*)

*White flowers, black drupe fruit, yellow to orange fall color*

### Ussurian pear\* (*Pyrus ussuriensis*)

*White flowers, small fruit, red wine fall color*

### Canyon maple\* (*Acer grandidentatum*)

*Slow growing, Rocky Mountain native, shades of yellow, orange and red in fall*



Ohio buckeye



Ussurian pear

## Small Ornamental Trees

(<25 feet mature height)

### Hawthorn species\* (*Crataegus spp.*)

*Flowers in the spring, small fruit produced, most varieties contain small thorns*

### Crabapple species\* (*Malus spp.*)

*Flowers in the spring, most varieties produce fruit, select a variety that has a high resistance to fire blight*

### Amur Maple\* (*Acer ginnala*)

*Yellow- white flowers, abundant seed, orange to red fall color*

### Tatarian Maple\* (*Acer tataricum*)

*Winged seeds good for birds, fall color orange-red, hardy tree*

### Sumac\* (*Rhus typhina* or *R. glabra*)

*Bright red fall color, spreads aggressively by suckers*

**American linden** (*Tilia americana*)

*Excellent street tree, dark green leaves, yellow-green fall color*

**Black walnut\*** (*Juglans nigra*)

*Edible nuts, great for squirrels and birds, nuts may create a mess*

**Northern catalpa\*** (*Catalpa speciosa*)

*Fragrant white flowers, pencil sized seedpods, large heart shaped leaves*

**Norway maple** (*Acer platanoides*)

*Shapely tree, leaf color varies with variety, protect from sun scald*

**Medium Shade Trees**  
(30 - 45 feet mature height)

**Littleleaf linden** (*Tilia cordata*)

*Yellow flower clusters, pea sized fruit, formal pyramidal form, excellent street tree*

**Canada red cherry\*** (*Prunus virginiana 'Shubert'*)

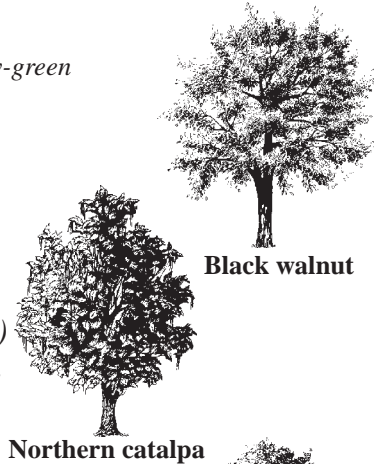
*White flowers, small fruit, new growth on plant is bright green and turns maroon, suckers*

**Horsechestnut\*** (*Aesculus hippocastanum*)

*Greenish-yellow flowers, prickly seed pod, yellow to orange fall color*

**Golden Raintree\*** (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)

*Yellow flowers in summer, papery pods, leaves red and turn green*



Black walnut

Northern catalpa



Norway maple



Littleleaf linden

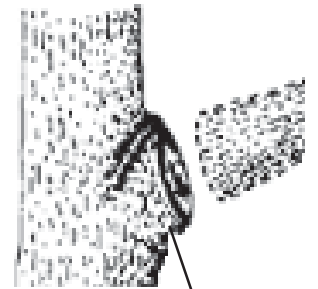


Horsechestnut

- **How much water should I apply?** Utilize the following “rule of thumb” for watering: apply 10 gallons of water per inch of tree diameter, for instance a 1 inch tree will require 10 gallons of water each time it is watered. For mature trees 10 inches in diameter or more, apply 15 gallons of water per inch of tree diameter. Use a ruler to measure your tree’s diameter.
- **Mulch helps conserve soil moisture.** Mulch is **critical** to conserve soil moisture. Apply organic mulch within the dripline, at a depth of three to four inches. It’s best to eliminate turf prior to adding mulch. Leave a six-inch space between the mulch and trunk of trees. Mulch materials may include wood chips, bark, leaves and evergreen needles.

**Tree Pruning**

Limit pruning of newly planted trees to corrective pruning. Remove torn or broken branches (save other pruning measures for the second or third year). Once the tree has established a good root system after planting (usually within 1 to 3 years), proper pruning is essential in developing a tree with a strong structure and desirable form. Trees that receive the appropriate pruning measures while they are young will require little corrective pruning when they mature.



Branch Collar

*pruning cuts should be made just outside the branch collar*

Location of a pruning cut is critical to a tree’s response in growth and wound closure. Pruning cuts should be made just outside the branch collar. Since the branch collar contains trunk or parent branch tissues, the tree will be damaged unnecessarily if you remove or damage it. In fact, if the cut is large, the tree may suffer permanent internal decay from an improper pruning cut.

For most young trees, maintain a single dominant leader. Do not prune back the tip of this leader. Do not allow secondary branches to outgrow the leader. Sometimes a tree will develop double leaders known as co-dominant stems. These can lead to structural weaknesses, so it is best to remove one while the tree is young. A

good structure of primary scaffold branches should be established while the tree is young. The scaffold branches provide the framework of the mature tree. Properly trained young trees will develop a strong structure that will require less corrective pruning as they mature. The goal in training young trees is to establish a strong trunk with sturdy well-spaced branches.

## Need Help?

This booklet does not provide all information, on all trees, for all locations. Each tree species has its own particular needs. The Colorado Tree Coalition strongly urges you to contact your local tree expert for more information, please call your:

- Community tree board
- City Forester
- City's Parks Department
- Arborist
- Forestry Consultant
- Tree Nursery
- Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
- Colorado State Forest Service District Office

# Recommended Trees for Plains Communities of Eastern Colorado

*\*Signifies trees that can withstand drier conditions*

## Large Shade Trees

(>50 feet mature height)

### English oak\* (*Quercus robur*)

*Produces acorns, rounded crown, dark green leaves turn brown and remain on tree through winter*

### Hackberry\* (*Celtis occidentalis*)

*Very hardy, can be susceptible to nipple gall, a cosmetic injury, reddish purple cherry like berries*



**Hackberry**

### Bur oak\* (*Quercus macrocarpa*)

*Produces acorns, fall color yellow to brown and occasionally red, very hardy and long lived*

### Honeylocust\* (*Gleditsia triacanthos inermis*)

*Hardy trees, dark green, fern-like leaves, yellow fall color*



**Honeylocust**

### Swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*)

*Produces acorns, deep green leaves white underneath*

### Kentucky coffeetree\* (*Gymnocladus dioica*)

*Fragrant white flowers, persistent seed pods produced, large shade tree*



**Kentucky coffeetree**

### American elm (*Ulmus americana*)

*Disease-resistant hybrids can be very hardy, broad shaped crown, excellent street tree*

### Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)

*Few insect and disease problems, pretty fall color, distinctive leaf shape*