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**GET YOUR HANDS IN THE DIRT**  
**CHOOSING THE RIGHT**  
**TREE TO PLANT IN**  
**YOUR YARD**





## **WHY PLANT TREES?**

Trees clean the air we breathe, filter the water we drink, and provide habitat for biodiversity. They also reduce temperatures, provide cooling shade during heat waves, and reduce flooding during storm events. With proper planning and preparation, you can plant a tree in your yard that will provide ecosystem services for years to come.

## **HOW TO PLANT THE RIGHT TREE, IN THE RIGHT PLACE, AND AT THE RIGHT TIME**

Follow these tips, recommended by certified arborists on our staff, to ensure that your planted tree can grow to maturity.



## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

When you plant a tree, the goal should always be for it to be able to grow to maturity and live out its life span on your property. With a little planning, you can ensure that the tree will not need to be removed prematurely:

- Space the tree at least 15 feet away from any structures or planned structures so that its roots and branches can grow without harming infrastructure, such as power lines, sidewalks, and underground pipes.
- Research the mature height and canopy width of your chosen species before making these final spacing decisions.
- Dial 811 to notify your utility company that you intend to dig, so that they can mark any underground utilities.
- Additionally, consider the tree location in regards to water access. How will you be watering the tree? Can your hose reach this location?



## NATIVE TO YOUR AREA

While exotic trees may lend unique beauty to your landscape, a native tree grown at a local nursery is adapted to your climate and will provide the most benefits to wildlife. It is also much less likely to cause environmental damage by competing with native vegetation on your property.

That said, while we would encourage people to always pick a native tree grown at a local nursery, if considering planting a non-native tree, please consult with a local arborist to ensure that it is suitable for the area and does not exhibit invasive tendencies. Some of the most popular residential tree and shrub species choices are highly invasive, so it is very important to do this research before making your final decision.



## ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS

While all trees provide ecosystem benefits, it is important to consider the specific functions you hope for your planted tree to provide. For example, if you would like to encourage pollinators, consider a flowering tree. If you would like to reduce temperatures and create shade, consider a shade tree.





## CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

While selecting a native tree species that will do well in your planting zone is important, equally as important is thinking about the long-term survival of your planted tree in a changing environment. Climate change is already altering planting zones, and the trajectory of change in your region should inform your species selection.

For example, if you are in an area that is experiencing temperature increases, you may be best off choosing a tree species that can tolerate rising temperatures and more intense droughts. It is also important to note that with a changing climate comes changing pest prevalence.

To really do your due diligence for climate change resilience, we recommend researching which harmful species might be prevalent in your area, or are on their way (ex. spotted lanternfly, emerald ash borer, etc.) See the resources on the next page to learn more, or consult with a local arborist for advice.



## SITE SUITABILITY/GROWING ENVIRONMENT

Trees have specific requirements for sunlight, soil, water, temperature, and more. Make sure to select a tree that will thrive in the area of your property that you have selected. For example, planting a tree that requires full sun, in a heavily shaded spot, will reduce the likelihood of survival.

- You should also consider the longevity of the species – do you want a tree with a lifespan of 20 years or 100?
- Underneath the ground is equally as important – make sure the species is a good match for the soil conditions on your property.
- Additionally, consider what type of leaf, fruit, or flower litter is acceptable for your maintenance capacity. Some trees drop large seeds (ex. the American Sycamore or Sweetgum) or sticky residue from their flowers (ex. Bottlebrush trees).



# RESOURCES

## IN-PERSON

- CONSULT WITH AN ISA-CERTIFIED LOCAL ARBORIST
- NATIVE TREE NURSERY
- LOCAL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
- STATE FORESTRY AGENCY

## DIGITAL

- AUDUBON NATIVE PLANT DATABASE TO LOOK UP TREES THAT ARE NATIVE TO YOUR AREA.
- THE USDA PLANT HARDINESS ZONE TOOL TO DETERMINE WHAT PLANTING ZONE YOU ARE IN.
- CAL POLY'S SELECTREE IS A FANTASTIC SPECIES SELECTION TOOL
- ITREE SPECIES TOOL IS ANOTHER GREAT SPECIES SELECTION TOOL
- ISA TREE OWNER INFORMATION FOR INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR TREE(S)

