



GARDEN NOTES

PICK A TREE THAT FITS YOUR LANDSCAPE

By Dennis Hinkamp

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How much would you pay for the perfect tree?

“There is no such thing as the perfect tree, although a few sellers claim they have some that are awfully close,” say Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. “I once saw a Japanese maple with a price tag of around \$30,000. For that price, the tree better grow money!”

“There are a few to consider planting in any landscape that are a little less expensive. Two small trees that are both attractive and have few problems are the crab apple and flowering crab apple.”

They range in size from six to 25 feet tall, depending on the variety, and are known for their graceful form, colorful leaves and distinctive shapes, Goodspeed says. They prefer a partially shady location with well-drained soil. Crab apple trees have a bad reputation for being messy. Older varieties drop fruit in the late summer and early fall, leaving a slimy, ugly scene where they are planted. However, new varieties have been developed that either don't have fruit, or the fruit is persistent, which means it remains on the tree until the birds come to eat it during the winter. For spring color, a flowering crab apple tree is hard to beat. The flowers range in color from white to deep red and purple, and their shapes vary as much as their blossom color. Some are hardy enough to survive severe winters.

In the category of medium-sized trees, two are outstanding, he says. The first is the ornamental pear. Like the crab apple, these trees have beautiful spring blossoms, which are usually white. They range in size from 25 to 45 feet tall. The old standard Bradford has some definite problems, but the newer varieties such as Capitol, Chanticleer and Redspire are improved and have better characteristics. Another good choice for a medium-sized tree is the sometimes hard-to-find American yellowwood. It grows between 30 to 45 feet tall, with a similar spread. It has wonderful, white, fragrant blooms that hang from the branches in late spring. Yellowwood trees have a graceful shape and are a good size for smaller properties that need a shade tree that won't overtake the whole area. It is hardy, down to about 30 degrees below zero, and has few pest problems. It likes well-drained soil, but can adapt to many different soil types.

“Where large trees are concerned, most are too big for smaller lots,” Goodspeed says. “I prefer a couple that are slow growing, but need a little extra room to grow and flourish. My favorite is probably the European beech. It can grow to a height of 50 or 60 feet, but takes almost a century to reach that size. Few trees look as stately and noble as a mature beech.”

These trees have few problems, and the foliage comes in a variety of colors and shapes, from the purple-leafed *Riversii*, to the tri-color (rose-pink, cream and purple) of the *Rosea-Marginata*. Another slow grower is the maidenhair or ginkgo tree. It grows a little faster than the beech, and can eventually reach heights of 60 to 80 feet high. The ginkgo's golden fall color is spectacular, and the unique leaf shape and stately appearance of the tree make it a great specimen throughout the year.

“When selecting a ginkgo, be sure to get the male of the species so it does not flower or have seeds,” he says. “The female trees are not only messy, but quite ‘stinky’ when in bloom. The smell resembles something you stepped in and wished you hadn’t.”

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

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