



GARDEN NOTES

TREES ARE A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Buying a few annuals on impulse won't cause much harm, but buying the wrong tree can be a costly, long-term blunder.

A tree is a lifetime investment so don't settle for whatever is on sale, says Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University Extension horticulturist. Make sure you get the right tree instead of planting one that will be a disappointment for years to come.

Some trees that are recommended for difficult growing conditions are not easy to find, he says. It may take extra effort, a few more calls or some patience as you wait for a nursery to get it, but it is always worth the time and effort. Most nurseries have a limited inventory, and sometimes they must wait until the next spring to bring in a special tree. It is worth the wait. Too many people get in a hurry, settle for weak, short-lived tree varieties, then pay for their impatience for many years after.

"Some trees I recommend are not real easy to find," Goodspeed says. "But, if you are willing to look around and work with your local nursery to locate them, you will be glad you did."

The common hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) is one of the hardier trees that can be grown in our area, he says. It is a tall tree that can adapt to nearly all growing conditions and soil types. It can grow in dry areas that get little, if any, extra irrigation, and also does quite well in heavy soils with high water tables. Another advantage to this tree is it grows fairly quickly, yet has few problems or weak wood. In the landscape it needs plenty of room and reaches a height of 50 feet with almost an equal spread.

Another tree that adapts well to a variety of different growing conditions is the Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*), Goodspeed adds. This tall tree requires plenty of room to grow, and its pods make it messier in the winter than the hackberry. Fortunately, the seed pods can be easily gathered up and discarded once they conveniently drop off mid-winter. I find the pods add interest to the tree at a time when the landscape is drab and dreary. The Kentucky coffee tree has a moderate growth rate, but under the right conditions may add as much as a foot of new growth in a year. This tree is known for its striking form in the winter and its attractive

bark. The name is derived from the pods being used to make a drink similar to coffee. From what I hear, this beverage is not a temptation for most coffee drinkers.

The Chinese or lacebark elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) is often confused with its ugly brother, the Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), he says. The Siberian elm is the common trash tree that is the scourge of most neighborhoods. However, the lacebark elm is another very adaptable tree that is quite attractive. This fast growing tree can reach heights of 40 to 50 feet, and needs some extra space to spread out and grow. One of its best assets is the bark, which has a mottled brown, gray, green, and orange appearance as it matures. It also has a nice, graceful shape that is attractive year round, and it has also shown good resistance to the elm leaf beetle.

“The Turkish filbert (*Corylus colurna*) is probably the least known tree on my preferred list,” Goodspeed says. “It can also reach a height of 50 feet over several years. Although it thrives in a moist, well drained soil, it can adapt to almost any growing conditions and soil types. It has few pests, but can produce a small nut that may become a nuisance.”

Don’t get discouraged when looking for the perfect tree for that difficult spot in your landscape, he suggests. Ask around. Don’t be afraid to ask your favorite nursery to bring in that unusual tree you want to buy.

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

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