Small Trees for Planting Near Power Lines

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Tree experts and utility companies suggest that people plant trees with a mature height of 25 feet or less near power lines, with taller trees kept farther away. Though taller trees are sometimes acceptable near power lines, they usually need drastic pruning to keep lines clear, which can be expensive and unsightly. See Figure 1 for guidelines on mature tree height and spacing away from overhead power lines.

There are a wide variety of small tree species and cultivars that can be planted near power lines and other places where a small tree may be needed. For example, paperbark maples only grow about 20 feet tall, are very attractive, and will not interfere with most power lines.

Some tree species naturally grow 25 feet tall or less, while others have certain cultivars (cultivated varieties) that grow shorter. For example, blue spruce is a species that normally has a mature height of 60 feet or more, while the cultivar ‘Bakeri’ matures around 20 feet tall.

There are many dwarf conifer cultivars that grow less than 25 feet and have the same form and color of the taller species. Some trees have weeping forms that are shorter than the species. For example, the fruitless white mulberry has a mature height of 35 feet or more while the ‘Chaparral’ weeping mulberry cultivar matures at only 15 feet tall. The double pink weeping cherry is a popular tree that only gets 12 to 15 feet tall.

Cold and heat tolerance are also very important when selecting a tree. USDA plant hardiness zones have been developed based on the average annual minimum temperatures but can give some indication of heat tolerance as well. Go to http://extension.usu.edu/forestry/HomeTown/Select_HardinessZones.htm for a hardiness zone table for Utah and surrounding states and http://usna.usda.gov/Hardzone/hzm-sw1.html for a map.
‘Bakeri’ Cultivar of Blue Spruce

Double Pink Weeping Cherry

Figure 1. Suggested tree spacing near power lines based on tree height

Low-growing trees (*under 25 feet when mature*) may be planted adjacent to overhead power lines.

Plant medium trees (*25 to 35 feet when mature*) at least 25 feet away from overhead power lines.

Plant large trees (*over 35 feet when mature*) at least 50 feet away from overhead power lines.
Hardiness zones in Utah range from Zone 3 in Rich and Summit Counties to Zones 5 and 6 along the Wasatch Front to Zone 8 in the St. George area. The lower the zone number, the more cold tolerant the plant is. Select tree species that have a hardiness zone rating no higher than the zone where the tree is to be planted. Remember to consider other important selection criteria including sun/shade exposure, soil conditions, pest resistance, and water requirements.

DO NOT PRUNE trees that are anywhere near overhead utility lines. If utility lines are present, even if you think they are not power lines, call your power company and they will tell you if it is OK to prune and how they can help. If pruning is needed near a power line, they will usually do it free-of-charge. They may offer to remove a problem tree near a power line and to pay part of the replacement cost for a small-maturing tree. If underground utilities might be involved, like when digging for tree planting, call Blue Stakes at 811 or 800-662-4111 or at www.bluestakes.org.

Table 1 lists many tree species and cultivars that are adapted to Utah that have a mature height of 25 feet or less. Some of these plants may also be found as a large, multi-stemmed shrub form. A few species are included that may grow slightly taller. Minor pruning may be necessary in some cases to keep some of these trees short enough. Trees that have a mature height of 25 to 35 feet should be planted 25 feet horizontally from power lines. New tree cultivars are constantly being introduced by the nursery industry, so check with your local nursery for other small tree species.

Visit the USU Tree Brower at www.treebrowser.org for detailed information and photos of many of these trees.

Table 1: Small Trees for Planting Near Power Lines

CONIFERS (mostly evergreen)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Height (in feet)</th>
<th>Width (in feet)</th>
<th>Zone</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abies koreana</td>
<td>Silberlocke Fir</td>
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<td>‘Horstmann’s Silberlocke’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eriobotrya japonica</td>
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<td>15-30</td>
<td>8-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus chinensis</td>
<td>Spartan Juniper</td>
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<td>4-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Spartan’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus osteosperma</td>
<td>Utah Juniper</td>
<td>10-30</td>
<td>10-30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus scopulorum</td>
<td>Rocky Mountain Juniper</td>
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<td>5-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Moonglow’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus scopulorum</td>
<td>Moonglow Juniper</td>
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<td>‘Wichita Blue’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus scopulorum</td>
<td>Wichita Blue Juniper</td>
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<td>‘Wichita Blue’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juniperus virginiana</td>
<td>Blue Arrow Juniper</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Blue Arrow’</td>
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<td>Juniperus virginiana</td>
<td>Skyrocket Juniper</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Skyrocket’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Picea abies</td>
<td>Norway Spruce – dwarf cultivars</td>
<td>3-17</td>
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<td>Picea abies ‘Cupressina’</td>
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<td>Latin Name</td>
<td>Common Name</td>
<td>Height (in feet)</td>
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<td><em>Picea abies</em> ‘Hillside’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea abies</em> ‘Pendula’</td>
<td>Weeping Norway Spruce</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea glauca</em> ‘Pendula’</td>
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<td><em>Picea mariana fastigiata</em> ‘Wellspire’</td>
<td>Wellspire Spruce</td>
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<td><em>Picea omorika</em> ‘Pendula’</td>
<td>Weeping Serbian Spruce</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea orientalis</em> ‘Green Knight’</td>
<td>Green Knight Oriental Spruce</td>
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<td><em>Picea orientalis</em> ‘Deer Run’</td>
<td>Deer Run Oriental Spruce</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea pungens</em></td>
<td>Blue Spruce – dwarf cultivars</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea pungens</em> ‘Baby Blue Eyes’</td>
<td>Baby Blue Eyes Spruce</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea pungens</em> ‘Bakeri’</td>
<td>Bakeri Spruce</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Picea pungens</em> ‘Fat Albert’</td>
<td>Fat Albert Spruce</td>
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<td><em>Picea pungens</em> glauca fastigiata ‘Blue Totem’</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pinus aristata</em></td>
<td>Bristlecone Pine</td>
<td>8-20</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pinus edulis</em></td>
<td>Pinyon Pine</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pinus heldreichii</em> ‘Leucodermis’</td>
<td>Bosnian Pine</td>
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<td><em>Pinus nigra</em> ‘Arnold’s Sentinel’</td>
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<td><em>Pinus nigra</em> ‘Compacta’</td>
<td>Compact Austrian Pine</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pinus nigra</em> ‘Oregon Green’</td>
<td>Oregon Green Pine</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pinus sylvestris</em> ‘Glaucum Nana’</td>
<td>Dwarf Blue Scotch Pine</td>
<td>5-8</td>
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</table>

**BROADLEAVES** (mostly deciduous)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Height (in feet)</th>
<th>Width (in feet)</th>
<th>Zone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Acer buergeranum</em></td>
<td>Trident Maple</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>20-25</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer campestre</em></td>
<td>Hedge Maple</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer ginnala</em></td>
<td>Amur or Ginnala Maple</td>
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<td><em>Acer glabrum</em></td>
<td>Rocky Mountain Maple</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer grandidentatum</em></td>
<td>Bigtooth Maple</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer griseum</em></td>
<td>Paperbark Maple</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer negundo</em> ‘Flamingo’</td>
<td>Flamingo Boxelder</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer negundo</em> ‘Kelly’s Gold’</td>
<td>Kelly’s Gold Boxelder</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer negundo</em> ‘Variegatum’</td>
<td>Variegated Boxelder</td>
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<td><em>Acer palmatum</em></td>
<td>Japanese Maple – many cultivars</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Acer platanoides</em> ‘Crimson Sentry’</td>
<td>Crimson Sentry Maple</td>
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<td><em>Acer platanoides</em> ‘Globosum’</td>
<td>Globe Norway Maple</td>
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<td><em>Acer tataricum</em></td>
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<td><em>Acer truncatum</em></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Height</td>
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<td><em>Amelanchier alnifolia</em></td>
<td>Saskatoon Serviceberry</td>
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<td><em>Amelanchier x grandiflora</em></td>
<td>‘Autumn Brilliance’</td>
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<td>‘Cole’s Select’</td>
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<td>‘Princess Diana’</td>
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<td>Snowcloud Serviceberry</td>
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<td><em>Amelanchier utahensis</em></td>
<td>Utah Serviceberry</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Betula occidentalis</em></td>
<td>Western Water Birch</td>
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<td><em>Catalpa bignonioides</em> ‘Nana’</td>
<td>Umbrella Catalpa</td>
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<td>Netleaf Hackberry</td>
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<td><em>Cercis canadensis</em></td>
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<tr>
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<td><em>Cercis chinensis</em> ‘Avondale’</td>
<td>Avondale Redbud</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Cercis occidentalis</em></td>
<td>California Redbud</td>
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<td><em>Cercocarpus ledifolius</em></td>
<td>Curlleaf Mountain-Mahogany</td>
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<td><em>Chionanthus retusus</em></td>
<td>Chinese Fringetree</td>
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<td>Fringetree</td>
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<td><em>Cornus alternifolia</em></td>
<td>Pagoda Dogwood</td>
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<td><em>Cornus kousa</em></td>
<td>Wolf Eyes Kousa Dogwood and other cultivars</td>
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<td><em>Corylus avellana</em> ‘Contorta’</td>
<td>Contorted Filbert</td>
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<td><em>Cotinus coggygria</em></td>
<td>Common Smoketree</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus crusgalli</em></td>
<td>Cockspur Hawthorn</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Crataegus laevigata</em></td>
<td>English Hawthorn</td>
<td>18-25</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus laevigata</em> ‘Crimson Cloud’</td>
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<td>18-25</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus laevigata</em> ‘Paul’s Scarlet’</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus x lavallei</em></td>
<td>Lavalle Hawthorn</td>
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<td>Toba Snowbird Hawthorn</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus phaenopyrum</em></td>
<td>Washington Hawthorn</td>
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<td><em>Crataegus viridis</em></td>
<td>Green Hawthorn</td>
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<td><em>Cydonia oblongata</em></td>
<td>Quince</td>
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<td><em>Fagus sylvatica</em> ‘Purple Fountain’</td>
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<td>Latin Name</td>
<td>Common Name</td>
<td>Height (in feet)</td>
<td>Width (in feet)</td>
<td>Zone</td>
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<td><em>Fraxinus anomala</em></td>
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<td><em>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</em></td>
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<td><em>Hamamelis x intermedia</em></td>
<td>‘Arnold Promise’</td>
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<td><em>Hibiscus syriacus</em></td>
<td>Rose-of-Sharon – tree form</td>
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<td>Koelreuteria paniculata</td>
<td>Goldenraintree</td>
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<td>Laburnum x watereri</td>
<td>Goldenchain Tree</td>
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<td>Lagerstroemia indica</td>
<td>Crapemyrtle</td>
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<td>Amur Maackia</td>
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<td>Magnolia x loebneri</td>
<td>Loebnner Magnolia</td>
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<td>Magnolia x soulangiiana</td>
<td>Saucer Magnolia – low-growing cultivars</td>
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<td>Magnolia stellata</td>
<td>Star Magnolia</td>
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<td>Malus spp.</td>
<td>Flowering Crabapple – many cultivars</td>
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<td>Malus hupehensis</td>
<td>Tea Crabapple</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malus sieboldii ‘Zumi’</td>
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<td>Physocarpus opulifolius</td>
<td>Diablo Ninebark – tree form</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prunus cerasifera</td>
<td>Cherry Plum</td>
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<td>Prunus cerasifera</td>
<td>‘Mt. St. Helens’</td>
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<td>‘Newport’</td>
<td>Newport Plum</td>
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<td>‘Thundercloud’</td>
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<td>Prunus padus ‘Merlot’</td>
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<td>‘Amanogawa’</td>
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<td>‘Kwanzan’</td>
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<td>‘Royal Burgundy’</td>
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<td>Prunus serrulata</td>
<td>‘Shirotae’</td>
<td>Mt. Fuji Cherry</td>
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<td>‘Snow Goose’</td>
<td>Snow Goose Cherry</td>
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<td>Prunus x ‘Snofozam’</td>
<td>Snow Fountain Weeping Cherry</td>
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<td>Prunus subhirtella ‘Pendula’</td>
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<td>Common Name</td>
<td>Height (in feet)</td>
<td>Width (in feet)</td>
<td>Zone</td>
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<td><em>Prunus virginiana</em> ‘Canada Red’</td>
<td>Canada Red Chokecherry</td>
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<td><em>Prunus x yedoensis</em> ‘Akebō no’</td>
<td>Akebōno Cherry</td>
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<td><em>Quercus gambelii</em></td>
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<td><em>Rhamnus frangula</em> ‘Columnaris’</td>
<td>Tall Hedge Buckthorn</td>
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<td><em>Rhus copallina</em></td>
<td>Flameleaf Sumac</td>
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<td>Smooth Sumac</td>
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<td><em>Rhus typhina</em></td>
<td>Staghorn Sumac</td>
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<td><em>Robinia pseudoacacia</em> ‘Lace Lady’</td>
<td>Twisted Baby Locust</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Salix caprea</em> ‘French Pink’</td>
<td>French Pink Pussy Willow</td>
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<td><em>Salix caprea</em> ‘Pendula’</td>
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<td>*Salix x ‘Scarcuzam’</td>
<td>Scarlet Curls Willow</td>
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<td><em>Styrax japonicus</em> ‘JFS-D’</td>
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<td><em>Syringa reticulata</em> ‘Ivory Silk’</td>
<td>Ivory Silk Japanese Tree Lilac</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Ulmus glabra</em> ‘Camperdownii’</td>
<td>Camperdown Weeping Elm</td>
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<td><em>Wisteria sinensis</em></td>
<td>Tree Form Wisteria</td>
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<td><em>Zelkova serrata</em> ‘Schmidtlow’</td>
<td>Wireless Zelkova</td>
<td>25</td>
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References
Kuhns, M. *Trees & power lines*. USU Extension, EL-270.
*Valley Nursery Catalog*. 2007. Ogden, Utah.

Acknowledgments
Thanks to J & J Nursery and Garden Center, J & L Garden Center, and Tri-City Nursery for reviewing the tree list for local availability.

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