

Structural Plants for Design

Cheryl Salatino's List

Plant Characteristics

Trees

* = Native (generally NE to Eastern US)

Botanic Name	Common Name	Size HeightxWidth	Exposure	Soil Wet to Dry	Growth Rate	Landscape Features	Habit	Fall Foliage
Abies concolor	White Fir, Concolor Fir	30' x 15'-30'	Sun	Well drained, moist	Medium	Evergreen screen, soft look, some varieties have bluish needles	Conical, branched to base	Needle Conifer
Abies fraseri*	Fraser Fir	30' x 25'	Sun to Partial Shade	Moist, well drained	Slow	Christmas tree look	Pyramidal	Needle Conifer
Acer griseum	Paperbark Maple	20'-30' x equal or less	Sun to Part Sun	Adaptable, prefers moist well drained	Slow	Small specimen; exfoliating copper bark (cultivars vary on flakiness)	Upright-oval	Varies reds to yellows
Acer palmatum	Japanese Maple	15'-25' x same	Part Sun to Sun	Moist, well drained	Slow - Medium	Accent. Many varieties of leaf color and shape	Varies by cultivar: irregular or rounded	Reds, oranges, yellows. Color varies by variety.
Acer pennsylvanicum*	Striped Maple Moosewood	20' x 10'-15'	Part Sun to Shade	Moist	Slow	Striped bark; unique foliage shape	Understory. Irregular, upright. Single or multi-stemmed	Yellow
Acer rubrum*	Red Maple	40'-60''x same	Sun	Moist	Medium to Fast	Fall color, shade tree	Varies by cultivar: irregular or rounded	Reds, oranges Color can be inconsistent
Acer saccharum*	Sugar Maple	60' x 30'+	Sun	Moderate	Slow	Overall shape, Fall color; excellent shade tree	Dense, upright to rounded; resilient	Orange, red and yellow

Acer triflorum	Three Flower Maple	20*-30* x same	Sun to Part Sun	Moist	Slow	Focal tree; some bark exfoliation; Fall color; small leaves	Small, upright, spreading or rounded	Brilliant oranges or rose-red
Betula nigra*	River Birch	40' x 40'	Sun to Part Sun	Wet to Moderate	Medium to Fast	Exfoliating bark; movement	Pyramidal to rounded	Yellow
Betula papyrifera*	Paper Birch	50' x 50'	Sun to Part Sun	Wet to Moderate	Medium to Fast	Exfoliating white bark; movement	Pyramidal to rounded	Yellow
Carpinus betulus	European Hornbeam	40' x 40' Fastigate varieties available	Sun to Part Shade	Prefers Moist, adaptable to wide range	Slow - Medium	Screens and hedges. Easy to shape	Upright or oval, depends on variety	Yellow
Carpinus caroliniana*	American Hornbeam Musclewood Ironwood	15'-20' x same	Sun to Shade	Moist to Dry	Slow	Smooth bark, muscle-like	Understory. Single or multi-stemmed wide and flat	Yellow, orange, red
Cercidiphyllum japonicum	Katsura	40'-60' x 20'-30'	Sun	Moist, well drained	Fast	Bluish look, heart-shaped leaf, fast grower, dense	Pyramidal	Yellow
Cercis canadensis*	Eastern Redbud	25' x same	Sun to Part Sun	Moderate	Medium	Purple/pink bloom before foliage; May	Upright, broad, spreading crown; low branching	Yellow to yellow-green
Chamaecyparis obtusa	Hinoki Falsecypress	50'+ x 10'-20'	Sun	Moist, well drained	Slow to Medium	Specimen. Dwarf varieties and yellow foliage available	Upright and pyramidal	Broadleaf Evergreen
Chamaecyparis thynoides*	Atlantic White Cedar	20'-40' x 6'-15'	Light Shade to Sun	Wet to Moist, well drained or sandy	Medium	Shaggy bark; narrower structure	Irregular shape. Tall and narrow	Broadleaf Evergreen

Chionanthus virginicus*	Fringetree Old Man's Beard	10'-20' x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	White fringe-shaped bloom, June	Single or multi-stemmed; rounded; dense or open depending upon exposure	Yellow-green
Cladastis kentukea (lutea)	American Yellowwood	30' x 40'+	Sun to Light Shade (needs winter protection)	Moist, well drained	Medium	White, fragrant 10" panicles of pea-like flowers, June	Upright, wide; vase shaped; short trunk	Yellow
Cornus alternifolia*	Pagoda Dogwood	15'-25' x wider spread	Partial Shade, adaptable	Moist, well drained	Slow	Interesting branching and shape. Small flowers, not showy	Spreading, horizontal	Some red color, not outstanding
Cornus kousa	Kousa Dogwood	20' – 30' x same	Sun	Moist, well drained	Slow	Specimen. Soft shape of tree and showy bloom. Offers horizontal branching.	Vase in youth; matures rounded	Varieties span from yellow to purple
Crataegus viridis*	Green Hawthorn	25'+ x same	Sun	Moist to Dry, well drained	Slow	Exfoliating Bark. White blossoms in May, red fruit, Watch thorns and Rose family concerns.	Dense, upright, oval, spreading	Scarlet and orange
Fagus sylvatica	European Beech	50' x 45'	Sun	Adaptable	Slow to Medium	Specimen. Many shapes available; also foliage color choices.	Pyramidal to Oval	Golden bronze
Ginkgo biloba (choose male varieties)	Ginkgo, Maidenhair Tree	50' x 40'	Sun	Moist, adaptable	Slow	Unique fan-shaped leaf; large presence – not for small spaces	Upright, wide	Yellow
Gleditsia triacanthos	Thornless Honeylocust	30' x 30'+	Sun	Wide variety. Drought and salt tolerant	Fast	Delicate, open branching – now overused	Open crown	Yellow - green

Halesia carolina*	Carolina Silverbell	25'+x same Smaller in shade	Sun to Part Sun to Shade	Moist to Dry	Medium to Fast	White bells bloom before foliage, May; winged fruit	Understory. Single or multi-stemmed. Rounded and broad. Low branching	Yellow-green
Liquidambar styraciflua*	American Sweetgum	60'+ x 2/3 ^{rds} of height	Sun to Part Sun	Moist	Medium to Fast	Foliage shape; Fall color. Messy, fruit litter	Pyramidal to rounded	Reddish orange to burgundy
Liriodendron tulipifera*	Tulip Tree	70'+x 30'+	Sun to Part Sun	Moist	Fast	Tulip shaped yellow/white flowers on higher branches, May; Foliage shape; stately	Tall, oval. Pyramidal in youth	Yellow
Magnolia arboretum*	Cucumbertree magnolia	50' x50'	Sun to Part Shade	Moist	Medium – Fast	Large statement – needs space.	Rounded, wide	Brown
Magnolia x soulangeana	Saucer Magnolia	20' – 30' x variable	Sun to light Shade (protect from Southern exposure)	Moist	Medium	Small tree. Early, showy floral display.	Wide, spreading. Sometimes multi-stemmed shrub	Yellow-brown
Magnolia stellata	Star Magnolia	15' – 20' x variable 10' – 15'	Sun (protect from Southern exposure)	Moist	Slow	Accent. Small tree. Early, showy floral display. Flowers open before leaves.	Dense, oval tree to rounded shrub	Yellow-bronze
Magnolia virginiana*	Sweetbay Magnolia	10'-20'x8'-15'	Light Shade	Moist to Wet	Slow to Medium	Fragrant creamy white bloom in June/July	Single or multi-stemmed; open	Semi-evergreen, if protected
Nyssa sylvatica*	Black Tupelo Black Gum	30'-50' x 20'-30'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Wet	Slow Tap-rooted	Interesting bark, irregular shape and fall color	Irregularly rounded	Orange, scarlet or purple

Oxydendron arboretum*	Sourwood Lily-of-the-Valley Tree	25'-30' x 20'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Fragrant lily-of-the-valley type flowers in July/Aug; furrowed bark	Pyramidal	Red, scarlet, or plum
Picea glauca*	White Spruce	40'+ x 15+	Sun to Part Sun	Moist	Medium	Dense and stately	Pyramidal, conical	Needle Conifer
Pinus flexilis	Limber Pine	30'-50'x15'-35'	Sun to Part Sun	Moist to dry, well drained	Slow	Long needles, flexible branches	Broad, flat-topped	Needle Conifer
Pinus strobus*	Eastern White Pine	Spans from dwarfs of 2' to trees of 60'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Dry, well drained	Fast	Wispy needles, airy	Pyramidal, but varies	Needle Conifer
Pseudotsuga menziesii	Douglas Fir	30' x 20'	Sun	Moist, well drained	Slow	Specimen. Slow growing. Protect from wind.	Broad pyramidal	Needle Conifer
Quercus palustris*	Pin Oak	60' x 25'	Sun	Moist	Fast	Adaptable to tough situations	Pyramidal; fastigate varieties	Bronze
Quercus rubra*	Red Oak	75' x same	Sun	Sandy, well drained	Medium	Shade tree; interesting bark	Upright, spreading	Late color. Red, yellow and tan
Sciadopitys verticillata	Umbrella – pine	20' - 30'+ x 15' - 20'	Sun	Moist	Slow	Specimen	Spire-like, spreads with age	Needle Conifer
Stewartia pseudocamellia	Japanese Stewartia	30' x 30'	Sun, some afternoon protection	Moist, well drained	Slow	Exfoliating bark, winter interest	Pyramidal - oval	Yellow - purple
Thuja occidentalis*	Eastern Arborvitae	40'x 15'	Sun	Moist, well drained	Slow to Medium	Hedges and screens. Susceptible to wind, snow and ice damage	Pyramidal – with one to multi stems	Broadleaf Evergreen – brownish green
Tilia cordata	Littleleaf Linden	60' x 30'-45'	Sun	Moist, well drained	Medium	Shade tree	Upright -oval	Yellow - green
Tsuga canadensis*	Eastern Hemlock	40' x 30'	Sun to Shade	Moist, well drained	Medium	Understory. Graceful. Under attack by pests.	Pyramidal	Needle Conifer

Large Shrubs

Botanic Name	Common Name	Size HeightxWidth	Exposure	Soil Wet to Dry	Growth Rate	Landscape Features	Habit	Fall Foliage
Aesculus parviflora*	Bottlebrush Buckeye	8'-12' / 15'+	Sun to Shade	Dry to moist	Slow, suckering	White bloom, July	Rounded multi-stem mound	Soft yellow
Amelanchier canadensis*	Shadblow Serviceberry	6'-20' x 10'-12'	Light Shade to Sun	Wet to Moderately Dry	Medium	White bloom, April. Black fruit	Multi-stemmed suckering shrub	Yellow
Cornus alba	Tatarian Dogwood	6'-10'x6'-8'+	Sun to Light Shade	Wet to Moderately Dry	Fast	Bright red stem in winter	Multi-stem, suckering thicket	Bright red stem in winter
Cornus sericea*	Red Osier Dogwood	6'-10'x6'-8'+	Sun to Light Shade	Wet to Moderately Dry	Fast	Bright red stem in winter	Multi-stem, suckering thicket	Bright red stem in winter
Cotinus coggygria	Smokebush or Smoke Tree	10'-15' x 18'	Sun	Adaptable	Medium	Focal point or accent. Flower panicles give smoky appearance.	Upright, spreading, open	Yellow-red-purple, can vary
Enkianthus campanulatus	Redvein Enkianthus	8'+ x 4'+	Sun to Part Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Rarely used, bell-shaped flowers and tufted foliage	Narrow, upright with layered branches; rounded with age	Yellow to orange, red
Fothergilla major	Large Fothergilla	6'-12' x same	Sun to Light Shade	Wet to Dry	Slow to Medium	White bottlebrush bloom before foliage; Fall color.	Tall and wide, rounded dense mound	Yellow, orange, red
Hamamelis intermedia	Common Witchhazel	15' x 15', some wider than tall	Sun to Part Shade	Moist	Slow	Spider-like yellow flowers in March; lite fragrance	Understory. Multi-stemmed, loose and open; rounded	Yellow to yellow-orange
Hamamelis virginiana*	Common Witchhazel	10'-15' x same	Sun to Part Shade	Moist	Medium (faster in youth)	Spider-like yellow flowers in Oct (often foliage	Understory. Multi-stemmed,	Yellow

						is still present); lite fragrance	loose and open; rounded	
Heptacodium miconiodes	Seven-son Flower	15' x 10'-12'	Part Sun to Sun	Moist, well drained yet adaptable	Medium	Late season white flowers on long panicles, turning red; some fragrance; exfoliating bark	Upright, loose multi-stemmed shrub or small tree	None
Hibiscus syriacus	Rose-of-Sharon	8'-12' x 6'- 10'	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well drained yet adaptable	Medium	Late season bloomer with range of flower colors	Upright, erect shrub to small tree	Yellow-green
Hydrangea paniculata	Panicle Hydrangea	8'-15' x same	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well drained	Fast	White flowers in Aug, changing to pink. Newer varieties more upright	Upright, spreading, semi-arching	Green -yellow
Ilex verticillata*	Common Winterberry	6'-10'x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Wet	Slow	Red berries persist when foliage drops	Upright to broad and open, rounded. Suckers to forms colonies.	Yellow-green
Kalmia latifolia*	Mountain Laurel	5'-12'x same	Part Sun to Part Shade	Moist to Dry	Slow	June bloom, showy. Flowers include white, pink and red	Uneven growth, twisted branching, becomes open	Broadleaf Evergreen
Lindera benzoin*	Spicebush	8'-15'x same	Part Sun to Shade	Moist to Wet	Slow to Medium	Yellow flowers bloom before foliage appears, April	Multi- stemmed, open	Yellow
Physocarpus opulifolius*	Ninebark	5'-10' x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Dry	Medium to Fast	Peeling bark. Red-leafed varieties, white flowers in June	Multi- stemmed, rounded, weeping	Slight change
Pieris japonica	Andromeda	8'-12' x 6'-8'	Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well drained	Slow	Lily-of-valley white bloom, April. Red new	Upright	Broadleaf Evergreen

						growth on new cultivars		
Rhododendron calendulaceum	Flame Azalea	8'-15' x 5' -8'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Apricot, orange to red bloom, May	Tall, upright. Rounded at top, spreading	Yellow to Maroon. Inconsistent
Rhododendron catawbiense*	Catawba Rhododendron	6'-10' x 8'+	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Big floral display, many varieties and colors	Upright, wide oval	Broadleaf Evergreen
Rhododendron maximum*	Rosebay Rhododendron	10'-15' x same	Part Sun to Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Pink to white bloom, early summer	Multi-stemmed, multi-branched. Irregular	Broadleaf Evergreen
Rhododendron vaseyi*	Pinkshell Azalea	5'-10' x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Soft Pink bloom	Upright, wide oval	Red to Maroon
Syringa vulgaris	Common Lilac	8'-15' x same	Sun	Moderate	Medium	Flowers have strong fragrance; nostalgic plant	Upright, leggy multi-stemmed; suckering	None
Taxus media	Anglojap Yew	Variable	Sun to Shade	Moist, sandy	Slow	Hedges, screens, specimen. Many varieties available	Broad, pyramidal or upright	Needle conifer
Vaccinium corymbosum*	Highbush Blueberry	6'-12'x same	Sun to Part Sun	Wet to moderately dry	Slow	Fruit, July/Aug. Fall foliage, wildlife contribution	Upright, multi-stemmed rounded form	Red, burgundy, crimson
Viburnum dentatum*	Arrowwood	6'-15' x 6'-10'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Dry	Medium to Fast	White flowers, May. Blue fruit in Fall	Dense multi-stemmed, vase to rounded. Spreads by suckers	Reddish purple
Viburnum plicatum tomentosum	Doublefile Viburnum	8'-12' x same+	Sun to Part Sun	Moist, well drained	Medium	Elegant. White flowers are opposite on the branch yielding a striking effect.	Horizontal, tiered/layered branching	Reddish-purple

Viburnum trilobum*	American Cranberrybush	8'-12' x 10'-15'	Sun to Part Sun	Moist	Medium	White flowers, May/early June. Bright red fruit in Fall	Vase shaped to rounded	Reddish purple
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Mid-Sized Shrubs

Botanic Name	Common Name	Size HeightxWidth	Exposure	Soil Wet to Dry	Growth Rate	Landscape Features	Habit	Fall Foliage
Aronia arbutifolia*	Red Chokeberry	6' -10'/ 4'-8	Sun to Part Sun	Wet to Dry	Medium	White, May. Bright red fruit in Fall	Upright, rounded clump. Multi-stemmed	Scarlet red
Cephalanthus occidentalis*	Buttonbush	3'-8' x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Wet	Medium to Fast	White ball-shaped bloom, May. Attracts butterflies	Multi-stemmed thicket, may die back	Yellow
Clethra alnifolia*	Summersweet	4'-9'x same	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Wet	Slow to Medium	Fragrant white panicle flowers on new wood, July. Bees love this plant	Upright, oval and suckering. Leafs out late	Yellow
Comptonia peregrina*	Sweetfern	2'-4'x same+	Sun to Part Sun	Dry, infertile	Fast colonizer	Aromatic foliage	Mounded, spreading	Rusty oranges
Fothergilla gardenia*	Dwarf Fothergilla	3'x5'x 2'x 5'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Wet	Slow	White bottlebrush bloom before foliage, April/May; Fall color	Spreading, rounded	Yellow, orange, scarlet
Hydrangea arborescens*	Smooth Hydrangea	3'5'x3'-10'	Part Sun to Shade	Moist	Fast	Green to white ball-shaped flowers bloom on new wood, Summer	Clumpy, rounded via unbranched canes	Pale yellow to brown
Hydrangea macrophylla	Bigleaf Hydrangea	3'-6' x same+	Sun to Part Shade	Moist	Fast	Reblooming mophead and lacecap varieties produce flowers all season on old and new wood. Showy.	Rounded, dense	Yellow-bronze

Hydrangea quercifolia*	Oakleaf Hydrangea	4'-8'x4'-12'	Sun to Light Shade	Moist to Moderately Wet	Slow to Medium	White panicle flowers, July; maturing to pink. Exfoliating cinnamon bark	Upright, forming mounded colonies	Shades of red, orange and purple
Hypericum frondosum*	Golden St. John's Wort	3'-6' x 3'-4'	Sun to Part Sun	Moist to Dry	Medium	Bright yellow flowers, July	Rounded	Yellow
Ilex glabra*	Inkberry	3'-8' x same	Sun to Part Sun	Moist to Moderately Dry	Slow	Good movement. Black fruit, Sept.	Upright, opens with age	Broadleaf evergreen
Itea virginica*	Virginia Sweetpire	3'-6' x 3'-10'	Sun to Light Shade	Wet to Moderately Dry	Medium	White bottlebrush flowers, June. Fall color.	Arching, rounded, suckering colonies	Crimson
Pieris floribunda*	Mountain Andromeda	2'-4' x 2'-3'	Part Sun to Part Shade	Moist, well drained	Slow	Lily-of-valley white bloom, April	Small, rounded or mounded	Broadleaf Evergreen
Weigela florida	Old Fashioned Weigela	Various	Full Sun	Moderate, well drained	Medium	Red leafed varieties add interest to shrub border	Rounded, spreading and arching	None

Groundcovers

Botanic Name	Common Name	Size HeightxWidth	Exposure	Soil Wet to Dry	Growth Rate	Landscape Features	Habit	Fall Foliage
Arctostaphylos uva-uri	Bearberry	6"-12"	Sun to Part Sun	Sandy	Medium	White flowers in spring, fall berries	Spreader	Reds
Gaultheria procumbens	Wintergreen	6"	Part Shade to Shade	Moist	Slow	White flowers in spring, fall berries	Spreader	Reds
Gaylussacia brachycera	Box Huckleberry	6"-8"	Sun to Part Shade	Moist	Medium to fast	White flowers in spring, fall berries	Spreader	Reds

Definition of Terms: A Rule of Thumb

Sun Exposure:

Exposure	Description	Comments
Sun or Full Sun	Minimum of 6 or more hours of direct, unobstructed sunlight	Sun loving plants often crave 8 or more hours of direct sunlight during the growing season
Part Sun	6 hours of direct, unobstructed sunlight	Sun protection during the heat of the day
Light Shade	Minimum of 4 to 6 hours of direct, unobstructed sunlight	Brightly lighted area with direct sun for part of the day
Part Shade	Minimum of 2 to 4 hours of direct, unobstructed sunlight	Sunlight at beginning and/or end of day
Shade	Minimum of 2 hours of direct, unobstructed sunlight	Often blocked by trees or buildings
Deep Shade	No direct sunlight; pockets of dappled sunlight	Still plenty of light, this is not considered darkness

Note: The height of the sun changes with the seasons as does the length of day. When determining sun patterns, observe the seasonal changes. Sun exposure is defined as the light requirement during the growing period.

Source: University of Connecticut

Rate of Growth: generally considered the vertical increase in growth

Fast	25" or greater per year
Medium	13" to 24" or less per year
Slow	12" or less per year

Note: Rate of growth is influenced by many variables: soil, drainage, light, water, nutrients, stress and more.

Source: Michael Dirr. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*.