



TREES & SHRUBS

Small Deciduous Trees

no. 7.418

by J.E. Klett and C. Wilson¹

Quick Facts...

Consider available space, protection, growth rate and soil adaptability when selecting small trees.

If space allows, several kinds of small trees provide varied foliage, flowers, bark, fruit and fall color for year round interest.

Make sure the water requirements of the tree match the conditions at your site.

Look for new varieties of small trees that are continually introduced.

Selection and Planting

Examine the proposed site before planting trees. Allow adequate width to keep walkways, entryways, driveways or buildings clear of overhanging branches. Many small trees, although short, can spread as much laterally as vertically.

Soil. Prepare soil before planting. Loosen it several feet in all directions from the spot you wish to plant. If the soil is heavy clay and hard to work, add aged manure or compost, and work it into the soil at least 12 inches deep. A wider selection of trees is available for planting on long-cultivated soils than new sites.

Color and texture. For variety, plant several kinds of trees if space allows. Through careful selection, you can have flowers, colorful and interesting bark and fruits, varied foliage texture, and fall colors for year round interest. Coordinate with other plants and elements of your overall landscape design.

Water. Match the plant with the moisture conditions of the site. Low-moisture trees planted in an irrigated lawn grow too fast. On the other hand, trees that require moderate to heavy moisture do poorly in areas where little or no supplemental water can be applied.

Protection. Microclimate sites protected by buildings, fences and larger trees offer greater opportunities for tree selection than open, exposed locations.

Recommended Trees

Table 1 includes small trees that are useful for privacy screening as well as landscape interest. Most can be used beneath power lines with little or no need for pruning to maintain clearance. For information on larger trees, see fact sheet 7.419, Large Deciduous Trees. The key to symbols used in the table is given below.

Growth rate:

f = fast

m = moderate

s = slow

Soil moisture:

L = low-water needs; can withstand drought.

M = moderate water needs; normal lawn watering.

H = heavy water needs; more than normal lawn watering.



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Table 1: Small deciduous trees for privacy and color.

Plant Name	Height (ft)	Spread (ft)	Shape	Growth Rate	Soil Moisture	Remarks
Acer campestre Hedge maple	25	25	Rounded	m	M	Dark green leaves, yellow fall color, tolerant of alkaline soils.
Acer ginnala Amur maple	20	15	Broad, spreading	m	M	Available as single-stemmed tree or multi-stemmed shrub; scarlet fall color; avoid alkaline soils.
Acer glabrum Rocky Mountain maple	15	15	Upright, oval	m	M	Native, small tree or large shrub, gray bark, yellow fall color, bright red winter buds.
Acer grandidentatum Wasatch maple	25	15	Broad, spreading	m	L	Survives in dry sites once established; orange-red fall color, more difficult to establish.
Acer tataricum Tatarian maple	20	20	Irregular, rounded	m	L	Single or multi-stemmed tree, pink to red winged seeds in summer, yellow fall color, tolerant of alkaline soils, more adaptable than Amur maple.
Alnus tenuifolia Thinleaf alder	15	12	Upright, oval	m	H	Use in moist sites; cone-like fruit clusters persist in winter, tend to form clumps.
Amelanchier canadensis Shadblow serviceberry	25	20	Upright, rounded	m	M	Showy, white flowers in spring; red fruits attract birds, red-orange fall color.
Amelanchier x grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance' Autumn Brilliance serviceberry	20	15	Rounded	m	M	White flowers, red to purple fruit, orange to red fall color, single-stemmed tree or multi-stemmed shrub.
Amelanchier laevis Allegheny serviceberry	20	15	Upright, irregular	m	M	Multi-stemmed tree, early spring white flowers, late purple fruits attract birds, tolerant of alkaline soils, yellow to orange fall color.
Betula occidentalis Rocky Mountain or water birch	20	15	Upright, rounded	m	H	Use in moist soils; yellow fall color, tends to form clumps, cherry-brown bark.
Carpinus caroliniana American hornbeam	25	25	Rounded, spreading	s-m	M	Low branched smooth gray bark, "muscled" branches, yellow-orange fall color.
Cercis canadensis Eastern redbud	25	25	Upright, spreading	m	M	Early pink flowers along twig before foliage; plant in part shade, heart shaped leaves.
Cornus alternifolia Pagoda dogwood	20	20	Rounded	m	M	Horizontal branching, creamy-white flowers followed by blue-black fruit, red to purple fall color.
Cornus mas Cornelian cherry dogwood	20	15	Rounded	m	M	Early yellow flowers before foliage, bright red fruit in summer.
Cornus racemosa Gray dogwood	15	15	Rounded	m	M	Available as a tree, creamy white flowers, white fruit with persistent red fruit stalks, purple fall color.
Crataegus ambigua Russian hawthorn	20	15	Upright, spreading	m	L	Finely cut, glossy leaves; white flowers; persistent, red fruit.
Crataegus crus-galli Cockspur hawthorn	20	20	Broad, rounded	m	L	Showy, white flowers; red fruit; glossy foliage; thorny; attracts birds.
var. inermis Thornless cockspur hawthorn	15	15	Broad, rounded	m	L	Thornless, other characteristics same as species.
Crataegus mollis Downy hawthorn	25	20	Broad globe	m	M	Showy, white flowers in spring; red fruit in late summer; bronze fall color, stout thorns.
Crataegus phaenopyrum Washington hawthorn	20	15	Upright, spreading	m	M	White flowers; showy, orange-red fruit; red-orange fall color; narrow thorns.
Crataegus x mordenensis 'Toba' Toba hawthorn	15	15	Rounded	m	M	Fragrant, double, white flowers, age to pink; red fruit, stout thorns.
Euonymus bungeanus Winterberry	20	18	Rounded	m	M	Horizontal to pendulous branching, yellow to red fall color, pink fruit capsules open to reveal orange seeds.
Euonymus europaeus European euonymus	15	15	Rounded	m	M	Pink to red fruit capsules open to expose orange seeds. Red to purple fall color.
Koeleruteria paniculata Goldenrain tree	25	20	Upright, rounded	m	L	Best grown on dry sites to avoid fast, brittle branch growth; large panicles of yellow flowers in summer; Chinese lantern-like pods.
Malus spp. Crabapple	Varies	Varies	Varies	m-f	M-L	Many varieties available.
'Brandywine' [®]	20	20	Rounded	m-f	M-L	Double pink flowers, large green fruit. More resistant to fireblight than 'Bechtel.'

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'Centurion' foliage.	20	10	Upright	m-f	M-L	Pink to red flowers; red fruit; red to bronze
'Coralburst®'	15	15	Rounded	m-f	M-L	Red buds open to semi- double pink flowers, few bronze fruit. Resistant to fireblight.
'David'	15	15	Rounded	m-f	M-L	Pink buds open to white flowers, yellow-red fruit matures to red. Resistant to fireblight.
'Dolgo'	30	25	Spreading	m-f	M-L	White flowers; crimson fruit, yellow bark, resistant to fireblight.
'Indian Summer'	15	15	Rounded	m-f	M-L	Rose-red flowers, red fruits. Resistant to fireblight.
'Radiant'	20	20	Rounded	m-f	M-L	Single, pink-red flowers; red-purple fruit.
sargentii 'Tina'	8	10	Spreading	m-f	M-L	Dwarf, red buds open to white flowers, red fruit.
'Spring Snow'	20	15	Upright, rounded	m-f	M-L	White flowers, usually fruitless; dense foliage; yellow bark.
Populus tremuloides Quaking aspen	30	15	Upright, columnar	f	M	Best in moist, well-drained soil; pest prone and shorter lived at lower Front Range elevations and in heavy soils; root suckers form clumps.
Prunus cerasifera 'Newport' Newport plum	20	20	Upright, rounded	m-f	M	Pinkish-white flowers followed by maroon-red foliage; avoid wet sites.
Prunus maackii Amur chokecherry	25	25	Upright, rounded	m	M	Striking, shiny, orange-red bark; white flowers; black fruit, avoid heavy soils.
Prunus nigra 'Princess Kay' Princess Kay plum	15	10	Upright, vase	m	M	Double white flowers before leaves, orange-red fall color, dark brown-black bark.
Prunus padus var. commutata Mayday tree	30	15	Rounded	m	M	Fragrant chains of white flowers in spring; purple-black fruit.
Prunus virginiana 'Shubert' Shubert or Canadian red chokecherry	25	20	Rounded	f	M	New green growth turns purple-red, white; flowers, purple fruit, suckers like aspen.
Ptelea trifoliata Wafer ash, Hoptree	15	15	Rounded	m	M-L	Native multi-stemmed tree, persistent wafer-like fruit, golden-yellow fall color.
Pyrus calleryana Callery pear	Varies	Varies	Varies	m	M	
'Aristocrat'	25	20	Pyramidal, oval	m	M	Wave, cupped leaves, white flowers, red to bronze fall color.
'Autum Blaze'	30	15	Pyramidal, rounded	m	M	Good cold hardiness, white flowers, crimson red fall color.
'Chanticleer®' ('Cleveland Select')	25	15	Pyramidal, upright	m	M	White flowers, red-purple fall color.
'Redspire'	25	10	Pyramidal, upright	m	M	Large white flower clusters, crimson-purple fall color.
Pyrus ussuriensis 'Prairie Gem'	20	18	Rounded	m	M-L	Yellowish-brown bark, many white flowers, thick glossy green leaves, golden-yellow fall color.
Prairie Gem pear						
Quercus gambelii Gambel oak	15	10	Upright, clump	s	L	Forms groves by creeping root stocks; often shrubby; needs well-drained soils; golden-yellow fall color.
Robinia pseudoacacia 'Purple Robe'	30	25	Upright, rounded	f	M-L	Bronze-red new foliage turns blue-green, showy dark rose-pink flowers, can have small thorns, subject to locust borer and branch breakage.
Purple Robe locust						
Sorbus aucuparia European mountain ash	20	15	Oval	m	M	Smooth gray-brown bark, malodorous white flowers, persistent orange-red fruit, yellow to red-purple fall color.
'Cardinal Royal'	25	15	Narrow oval	m	M	Straight trunk, dark green leaves turn russet-red in fall, red fruit, best in well drained soils.
Syringa reticulata Japanese tree lilac	20	20	Rounded	m	M	Creamy panicles of fragrant flowers in late spring, red-brown shredding bark.
'Ivory Silk'	15	15	Compact, oval	m	M	Creamy white flowers, cherry-like bark.

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