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**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

## Natural Resource Conservation: Small Trees for the Landscape Ordinance

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**T**ree and Landscape Ordinances require the planting of a variety of trees. Since trees are generally planted for the long term, species selection is important to success. Also, the planting sites such as commercial, retail and industrial, are more difficult for plant establishment than are the normal residential sites. For these reasons, the selection of trees is more critical when complying with tree and landscape ordinances.

One challenge of complying with Tree and Landscape Ordinances can be sourcing trees of small mature size. These are trees that can fit under utility lines or do not obscure the view of a building. The diversity of small trees used in commercial landscapes is often limited, perhaps due to a lack of awareness of available varieties.

This paper describes several small trees that perform well under southeastern United States conditions and the difficult sites associated with commercial development. It is intended to assist arborists, landscape architects and landscape installers in tree selection for small, restricted areas. Small trees, however, should not be a substitute for the larger canopy trees that are very important to the urban landscape and environmental health. For a more complete listing of trees and shrubs for general landscaping purposes, refer to *Landscape Plants for Georgia* (1), available from your county extension agent or on the Georgia Extension Service web site at <http://www.caes.uga.edu/publications/>

- (1) American Hophornbeam or Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*)
  - deciduous trees reach 25' to 40' height
  - performs well in the urban environment but can look tattered late in the season
  - interesting hop-like fruit
- (2) Cabbage Palm (*Sabal palmetto*)
  - relatively cold hardy (zone 8)
  - native along the coast from southern North Carolina to North Florida
  - mature height in Georgia is about 30'
  - large, blue-green palmate-type leaves with threadlike strands of fiber
  - prefers light (sandy) soil
  - full sun to partial shade
  - tolerant of salt spray and is insect and disease resistant
- (3) Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
  - flowering tree reaches height of about 25' and width of 25'
  - heavily branched multi-stem tree that blooms in early spring
  - northern seedlings or selections perform poorly in south Georgia
  - performs best as under-story trees (grown in shade) but tolerates full sun
  - beware of dogwood anthracnose (north Georgia) and powdery mildew (statewide)
- (4) Two-Winged Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia diptera* var. *magniflora*)
  - little-known native tree that reaches about 25' tall and about 20' in width
  - smaller relative of native *Halesia tetraptera*, which reaches 30-40' in height
  - multi-stem, low, branched tree
  - should be used in filtered shade conditions only, not full sun
  - beautiful white bell-shaped flowers hang from the branches in early spring
  - leaves turn a bold yellow color in the fall
- (5) Holly (*Ilex*) species, cultivars and hybrids
  - generally shrubs; several can be used as small trees for sun or shade locations

- Savannah holly has upright, pyramidal growth habit with light green leaves
    - does well in tough sites and usually has abundant fruit
    - benefits from nitrogen fertilizer when under heavy fruit load
  - Nellie R. Stevens, an upright hybrid with dense branching
    - dark green high-gloss leaves
    - can be shaped with light pruning
  - East Palatka holly, similar to Savannah holly but has darker green leaves and more open growth habit
  - Yaupon holly (*Ilex vomitoria*), excellent native holly under a variety of conditions
    - multi-stem small tree that usually grows about 15-20' tall
    - can create an effective screen between properties
    - produces copious quantities of reddish berries that last into spring
    - cultivars available, some with different color fruit (yellow and orange)
    - tolerant of coastal conditions
- (6) Little Gem Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)
- evergreen tree grows to about 20' tall
  - cultivar of more common large southern magnolia
  - flowers at small size (3-4') and has blooms scattered through the summer
  - flowers only slightly smaller than full size and showy on the smaller trees
  - does best in full sun but will stay fairly dense under shade
  - can be successfully pruned to increase density and refine shape
  - effective hedge or screen
  - similar selections include 'Hasse' and 'Alta'<sup>TM</sup>
- (7) Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia* sp.)
- one of the most commonly used small trees
  - valued for consistency of summer flowers when few other plants are in bloom
  - wide selection of flower color and plant size
  - range from the mounding dwarf forms to medium size trees of 20-30'
  - cultivars with Indian names are generally resistant to powdery mildew
- (8) Okame Cherry (cross of *Prunus campanulata* and *Prunus incisa*)
- matures about 20' in height with a similar spread
  - best flowering cherry for the heat of south Georgia
  - pinkish flowers striking in early spring
  - foliage can provide good bronze to orange-red fall color
  - performs well in a sunny, dry location during hot, dry summers
- (9) Japanese Apricot (*Prunus mume*)
- early season flowering (January) with size similar to Okame Cherry
  - range of flower colors available (white, pink, red) depending on the cultivar
  - flowers are double or single
- (10) Chastetree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)
- grows about 10-15' in height and can be trained as a multi-stem standard
  - deciduous tree without prominent fall color
  - tree produces abundant lilac, pale violet or white terminal flowers in the summer
  - removal of flowers after bloom can increase period of bloom
  - tolerates dry conditions
- (11) Farkleberry (*Vaccinium aboreum*)
- semi-evergreen to deciduous plant reaching 15-20 feet tall
  - dark green leaves turn striking red to crimson in fall
  - white flowers appear in early spring with leaf flush
  - pronounced black inedible berries, good wildlife plant
  - heat and drought tolerant
  - striking cinnamon-colored bark a plus
- (12) Chinese or Oriental Photinia (*Photinia serratifolia*)
- evergreen relative of the more common *Photinia x fraxeri*
  - unlike Fraser photinia, less susceptible to the dreaded entomosporium leaf spot
  - reaches about 20-25' in height and about two-thirds that in spread
  - can be used as a large hedge (great for screening) or small tree
  - very showy white blooms followed by small red fruit in the fall
- (13) Trident Maple (*Acer buergerianum*)
- deciduous tree reaching 20-30' tall
  - three-lobed leaves are dark green in summer and provide some fall color
  - does well in full sun and small planters
  - heat and drought tolerant

- (14) Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*)
  - striking small trees known for red-leaved cultivars
  - most selections have green leaves
  - reach 15-20' in height, although *dissectum* cultivars are much smaller
  - grow well in full sun, although in south Georgia, afternoon shade is preferred
  - requires adequate moisture and does not tolerate drought
  - *dissectum* cultivars do not perform well in sun or dry conditions
- (15) White Fringetree or Grancy Gray-Beard (*Chionanthus virginicus*) or Chinese Fringetree (*Chionanthus retusus*)
  - deciduous multi-stem tree reaching 15-25' tall
  - best known for the showy white flowers in late spring
  - slow-growing, generally seen on old homesteads
  - fall color is usually a good yellow
- (16) Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*)
  - evergreen tree that produces abundant, edible fruit, which is a hit with wildlife
  - dark green leaves and reaches height of 15-25'
  - does well in full sun but tolerates afternoon shade
  - tough tree with colorful fruit and year-round glossy foliage
  - susceptible to fireblight if conditions are favorable

- hardy in the southern half of Georgia
- (17) Southern Waxmyrtle (*Myrica cerifera*)
  - versatile evergreen plant grown as large shrub or small tree
  - reaches 10-15' height
  - grown in full sun or shade and in wet or dry areas
- (18) Devilwood or Wild Olive (*Osmanthus americanus*)
  - evergreen tree with open and loose growth habit, reaching 15-25' tall
  - grown in sun or shade but best leaf color obtained with some shade
  - white-yellow, fragrant flowers in spring followed by dark purplish fruit
  - may be difficult to locate but worth the effort
- (19) Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*)
  - slow growing, deciduous tree reaching 15-20' tall
  - white fragrant flowers during winter in south Georgia
  - grown in full sun for best flowering
  - performs well in partial shade, especially in south Georgia
  - cultivars available with different shades of pink to lavender flowers

### Literature Cited

- 1 *Landscape Plants for Georgia*. Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, University of Georgia.

### Small Tree Attributes

	Plant	Evergreen (E) or Deciduous (D)	Height (ft.)	Fall Color	Hardiness Zone
1	American Hophornbeam	D	25-40	not showy	entire state
2	Cabbage Palm	E	25-30	evergreen	8
3	Flowering Dogwood	D	20-25	orange, red	entire state
4	Carolina Silverbell	D	20-25	yellow	entire state
5	Holly	E	15-25	evergreen	7, 8
6	Little Gem Magnolia	E	15-20	evergreen	7, 8
7	Crape Myrtle	D	10-20	yellow, orange, red	7, 8
8	Okame Cherry	D	20-25	orange, red	entire state
9	Japanese Apricot	D	15-20	orange, red	entire state
10	Chastetree	D	10-15	not showy	7, 8
11	Farkleberry	D	15-20	red, crimson	7 - 8
12	Oriental Photinia	E	20-25	evergreen	7 - 8

Plant	Evergreen (E) or Deciduous (D)	Height (ft.)	Fall Color	Hardiness Zone
13 Trident Maple	D	20-30	yellow, orange, red	entire state
14 Japanese Maple	D	15-25	orange, red	entire state
15 Fringetree	D	15-25	yellow, brown	entire state
16 Loquat	E	15-25	evergreen	8
17 Southern Waxmyrtle	E	10-15	evergreen	7 - 8
18 Devilwood	E	15-25	evergreen	entire state
19 Star Magnolia	D	15-20	not showy	entire state

### Planting Site

Plant	Wet	Dry	Moist	Full Sun	Shade	Salt Spray
1 American Hophornbeam	X		X	X	X	
2 Cabbage Palm	X	X	X	X	X	X
3 Flowering Dogwood			X	X	X	
4 Carolina Silverbell			X		X	
5 Holly		X	X	X	X	
6 Little Gem Magnolia			X	X		
7 Crape Myrtle		X	X	X		
8 Okame Cherry			X	X		
9 Japanese Apricot			X	X		
10 Chastetree		X	X	X		
11 Farkleberry		X	X	X	X	
12 Oriental Photinia		X	X	X		
13 Trident Maple		X	X	X		
14 Japanese Maple			X		X	
15 Fringetree		X	X	X	X	
16 Loquat		X	X	X		
17 Southern Waxmyrtle	X	X	X	X	X	X
18 Devilwood		X	X	X		
19 Star Magnolia			X	X	X	

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