

Drought Tolerant Plant Species

The following is a list of plants that are very adaptable to dry conditions, and need to be considered when concerned about future water resources. All plants need supplemental water to help with their initial establishment, but these trees and shrubs will adapt and tolerate very dry conditions. If you are interested in conserving water, remove some of your turf areas, create a mulched planting bed with some of the following plants, and let the natural beauty of your landscape develop with limited water needs.

Ornamental Trees (Less than 30 ft)

Acer grandidentatum: Bigtooth Maple
Crataegus ambigua: Russian Hawthorn
Crataegus crusgalli: Cockspur Hawthorn
Forestiera neomexicana: New Mexican Privet
Prunus americana: American Plum
Ptelea trifoliata: Wafer Ash
Koelreuteria paniculata: Golden Rain Tree
Quercus gambelii: Gambel Oak

Shade Trees (Greater than 30 ft)

Catalpa speciosa: Western Catalpa
Celtis occidentalis: Hackberry
Fraxinus pennsylvanica: Green Ash
Gleditsia triacanthos inermis: Thornless Honeylocust
Gymnocladus dioicus: Kentucky Coffeetree
Quercus macrocarpa: Bur Oak
Quercus muehlenbergii: Chinkapin Oak
Quercus robur: English Oak
Sophora japonica: Japanese Pagoda Tree

Evergreen Trees

Juniperus monosperma: Oneseed Juniper
Juniperus scopulorum: Rocky Mountain Juniper
Pinus aristata: Bristlecone Pine
Pinus edulis: Pinyon Pine
Pinus flexilis: Limber Pine
Pinus ponderosa: Ponderosa Pine
Pinus nigra: Austrian Pine

Shrubs

Amorpha canescens: Leadplant
Artemisia spp.: Sage Species
Atriplex canescens: Saltbrush
Caragana spp.: Peashrub Species
Ceratoides lanata: Winterfat
Cercocarpus spp.: Mountain Mahogany Species
Chamaebatiaria millefolium: Fernbush
Chrysothamnus spp.: Rabbitbrush Species
Cotoneaster spp.: Cotoneaster Species
Cowania mexicana: Cliff Rose
Fallugia paradoxa: Apache Plume
Fendlera rupicola: Cliff Fendlerbush
Forestiera neomexicana: New Mexican Privet
Hippophae rhamnoides: Sea Buckthorn
Holodiscus discolor: Creambush
Holodiscus dumosus: Rock Spirea
Jamesia americana: Waxflower
Juniperus species: Spreading Juniper Species
Physocarpus monogynus: Mountain Ninebark
Prunus tomentosa: Nanking Cherry
Prunus besseyi 'Pawnee Buttes': Pawnee Buttes Sandcherry
Ramnus smithii: Smith's Buckthorn
Rhus spp.: Sumac Species
Ribes spp.: Currant Species
Rosa woodsii: Woods Rose
Rubus deliciosus: Thimbleberry
Shepherdia argentea: Silver Buffaloberry

Recommended Tree List

By no means does this list include every tree that could grow in Colorado. It is, however, an attempt to list the most commonly available trees and their characteristics. There is no perfect tree. Great care should be given to select the right tree for the right place. More detailed information on all trees can be obtained from your local nursery professional.

Deciduous Shade Trees (Typically Over 40' in mature height)			
American Linden	<i>Tilia americana</i>	30-40'/60on up'/moderate	Recommend the Redmond variety, very dense perfect canopy.
Black Walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>	50-75'/50-75'/slow	Does produce a nut. Does not like heavy pruning.
Western Catalpa	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	20-40'/40-60'/moderate	Great spring white blooms, very large heart shaped leaf.
Horsechestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	40-70'/50-75'/moderate	Large spiny fruit capsule. Best for large open areas.
European Larch	<i>Larix decidua</i>	25-30'	Deciduous ever green, wonderful tree.
Ginkgo	<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	30-40'/50-70'/slow	This tree has a very unique leaf shape. Female fruit has a rank smell, always pick male trees.
Green Ash, Marshall Ash, Patmore Ash, Summit Ash.	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	25-35'/50-60'/moderate	Tends to be over planted, some pest problems may be present. Some varieties have great fall color.
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	40-60'/40-60'/moderate	Avery drought hardy plant, excellent for streetscape. Leaf tends to get nipple gall, not damaging to the plant.
Japanese Pagoda Tree	<i>Sophora japonica</i>	50-75'/50-75'/slow	Characteristic persisting pod type fruit, excellent specimen tree.
Kentucky Coffeetree	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>	40-50'/60-75'/moderately slow	Tolerates dry urban conditions, only females produce fruit.
Large Leaf Elm varieties	<i>Ulmus species</i>	30-40'/60-70'/moderately fast	Pick a variety resistant to Dutch Elm Disease. This tree has one of the best shapes for street ways.

Littleleaf Linden	<i>Tilia cordata</i>	30-40'/60-70'/moderate	Very conical in shape, usually requires less pruning than most other deciduous varieties.
London Planetree or Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	60-75'/60-75'/moderate	Very characteristic white and green scaling bark.
Norway Maple	<i>Acer platanoides</i>	30-40'/40-50'/moderately slow	Maples are known best for their excellent fall color.
Oak , Bur Oak, English Oak	<i>Quercus species</i>	40-60'/40-60'/slow	This is a very hardy species in this area, tends to grow slower which helps to add strength, watch for chlorotic species, ie. Red Oak, Swamp White Oak.
Ohio Buckeye	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>	20-40'/20-40'/moderate	Best for large open areas due to fruit mess. Not a good Street tree.
Thornless Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos inermis</i>	30-70'/30-70'/moderately fast	Tends to be over planted, many insect problems existing, this is drought tolerant however.

Ornamental Trees (Typically Under 40' in mature height)			
Common Name	Latin Name	Typical Mature Width/Height/Rate	Characteristics
Amur Corktree	<i>Phellodendron amurense</i>	30-45'/30-40'/moderate	Characteristic gray furrowed bark that has a cork feel to it. Generally free of pests.
Crabapple	<i>Malus species</i>	20-35'/ 20-25'/moderate	Most commonly known for their Spring blossoms that range from white-pink-red-purple, get a cultivar that has persisting fruit, or a fruitless variety. Always pick a fireblight resistant variety.
Eastern Red Bud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	20-30'/20-30'/moderate	Excellent spring flowers, prefers more of a protected site.
Flowering Pear	<i>Pyrus species</i>	20-30'/ 30-40'/moderate	Great for the spring flower color and often vibrant fall colors. Important to pick a fireblight resistant variety.
Goldenrain Tree	<i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	30-40'/ 30-35'/moderate	Characteristic lantern shaped fruit capsules, orange-yellow fall color. Great species tree.
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus species</i>	20-30'/ 20-30'/moderate to slow	Generally great fall color, often unique characteristic bark, use a thorn less variety
Japanese Tree Lilac	<i>Syringa reticulata</i>	15-20'/20-30'/moderate	Creamy white flowers early to mid June.

Plum and Cherry	Prunus species	20-25' / 20-30'/moderate	Often sucker but great wildlife habitat
Serviceberry	Amelanchier species	5-15' / 5-15'/medium	Fragrant white flowers.
Evergreen Trees			
All evergreen trees listed below should be planted a minimum of 15' from streets, sidewalks, and permanent structures.			
Common Name	Latin Name	Typical Mature Spread/ Height/ Rate	Characteristics
Small Evergreen Trees (under 30 feet at maturity)			
Bristlecone Pine	Pinus aristata	10'/15-20'/slow	Long living, very drought hardy, pine tip moth, pine needle scale
Pinyon Pine	Pinus edulis	20-25' / 20-30' / moderately slow	Shorter tree/ edible nuts mature branch spread, tolerates drought hardy sites
Eastern Arborvitae	Thuja occidentalis	10-15' / 40-60' / slow	Works great as a screening hedge.
Upright Juniper	Juniperus species	10-15' / 10-20' / moderate	Dense growth form, good wildlife habitat.
Large Evergreen Trees (over 30 feet at maturity)			
Austrian Pine	Pinus nigra	20-30' / 30-60' / moderate	Becomes drought tolerant, once established.
Blue Spruce or Colorado Spruce	Picea pungens glauca	20-30' / 30-60' / moderate	Available in Green and Blue, also likes moist well drained soils.
Scotch Pine	Pinus sylvestris	25-35' / 60-70' / moderately fast	Generally a more open-airy form, unique copper colored bark is attractive
White Fir	Abies concolor	20-30' / 30-60' / moderate	This tree likes moist well-drained soils, similar to blue spruce.

Species Not Recommended

Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)

Has many insect and disease problems that are generally not present in Native Mountain areas.

Austree (*Salix alba X Matsudana*)

Extremely weak wooded, often sold through mail order as a miracle tree that it is not.

Birch (*Betula* species)

This tree does not do well in Colorado climate as it once did.

Boxelder (<i>Acer negundo</i>)	Female tree attracts Boxelder Bugs that invade houses and can become a nuisance.
Cottonwood (<i>Populus</i> species)	Cotton is a high nuisance on cotton bearing trees, Cottonwoods also tend to be very weak wooded, good tree for large open spaces.
Hopa Crabapple (<i>Malus</i> species Hopa)	This tree has very high susceptibility to the bacterial disease fire blight. Pick a Crabapple species that has low susceptibility.
Mountain-Ash (<i>Sorbus</i> species)	Very susceptible to Fire Blight.
Russian Olive (<i>Eleagnus angustifolia</i>)	Invasive nuisance tree, on Colorado Department of Agriculture's list of noxious weeds.
Siberian Elm (<i>Ulmus pumila</i>)	Extremely weedy and invasive, seeds profusely. Very rapid growth creates extremely weak wood.
Silver Maple (<i>Acer saccharinum</i>)	Very weak wooded tree.
Tamarisk (<i>Tamarix</i> species)	State Department of Agriculture noxious weed list, extremely invasive.
Tree of Heaven (<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>)	Very rapid growth creates weak wooded tree, can be very invasive.
Willow (<i>Salix</i> species)	There are many kinds of willows, this is a weak wooded species which can be potentially hazardous placed in the wrong location. Typically after most rain or wind storms twigs or branches will be on the ground.

****Ash trees are not recommended for planting, as the Emerald Ash Borer pest has reached Colorado, and is expected to wipe out an estimated 99% of untreated ash trees in infected areas of Colorado.**