CHOOSING THE RIGHT TREE

There’s something majestic about having a tree in your backyard. They add grandeur and sophistication to even the smallest of spaces.

Choosing the right tree for your space can be a daunting process, but armed with the right information, and some thought as to what you would like from any trees you may choose to grow, helps to simplify the process.

This guide covers some of the points to consider when choosing the right tree for your space:

- What to look for when purchasing a tree.
- How to plant your tree to give it the best possible start.

We’ve also added a spreadsheet of some of our highly recommended trees for small spaces, to help you choose the best tree for your situation.

PURPOSE OF THE TREE

Shade: Do you need shade for your house or garden? Should it be year round shade (evergreen tree), or is summer shade and winter sun preferable (deciduous tree)?

Screen: Are you trying to hide a fence, a shed, or your neighbours? Would you like it to act as a buffer to wind, sound and other elements?

Specimen: Are you after a tree that will be a standout feature in your garden, either as a specimen or a focal point?

Wildlife: Are you wanting to attract birds and wildlife into the garden?

Productive: Would you like to harvest fruits, berries, nuts or flowers?

Features: Do you want flowers, foliage, berries, fruits or sculptural bark?

YEAR-ROUND INTEREST

Foliage: Evergreen trees provide reliable foliage colour year round. Although most are variations of green, if you look a little wider, there are evergreen trees with attractive silver, blue, yellow and burgundy foliage that can add a tapestry of colour to the garden all year.

Deciduous trees offer seasonal colour variations that change throughout the year, marking each season in its own unique way. In cooler climates, autumn offers the most vibrant hues of yellow, orange and red, and will make the most striking focal point in any garden.

Flowers: Most flowering trees flower in spring or summer and look spectacular during this time, but are unfortunately non-descript for the rest of the year. Keep this in mind when planning (ie. flowering Cherries and Magnolias).

Berries and Fruit: Fruits not only look wonderful on any tree, there is something rather attractive about the fact that you can have a tree and get a harvest as well. Berries and fruits can add wonderful colour to the garden and will provide a source of food for wildlife.

This can be a nuisance if they attract animals you do not want, a hazard if they fall onto paths and walkways, and staining on some paved surfaces.

Bark: The bark of a tree can be a feature of its own, particularly in winter on trees that have lost their leaves. Some trees look beautiful with the peeling bark showing off the bright new colours of the stem underneath.

Some have attractive coloured patches up the trunk and main branches like Lagerstroemia indica, others like Silver Birch have stunning silver/white bark that looks wonderful all year round.

Continued over page...
SIZE AND SHAPE

SIZE: What is the size of the available space that you can allocate to a tree? How big will your chosen tree grow when it reaches maturity, and will this fit into the space you have? Are you willing to prune the tree to maintain a more compact habit?

Keep in mind that tree dimensions are usually suggested at the size they will grow to at maturity, in ideal conditions, with no pruning or interference. Often, they won't make it to the suggested size when planted in a suburban backyard.

SHAPE: There is no standard tree shape or habit. Trees come in all shapes and sizes, and some are better suited to smaller gardens.

Upright and columnar habits are perfect for small gardens where space is limited, or if you want to achieve an avenue look in a tight space.

Weeping trees are fantastic as specimens in the middle of a lawn or as part of a kids garden because they provide ample places to hide. They also look lovely over a pond where the long stems trail down and hover above the water.

SPEED OF GROWTH: How soon you require the tree to reach its mature height can play an important role in your choice of tree.

If you're wanting to hide neighbours or buildings quickly, you will need to select a tree with fast growth. Or, if you're happy to watch it grow slowly over time, knowing it will be there for many years to come, you'll be happy with a moderate to slow growing tree.

PURCHASING YOUR TREE

Most trees can be purchased in one of two forms: Either as a potted plant (year round), or bare-rooted (in winter).

Bare-rooted trees are usually only deciduous trees and they are sold in winter when the tree is dormant. They are usually cheaper and establish quickly when the new growth emerges in spring.

Choose a healthy specimen with good stem structure. Check the roots and see if they still look healthy and importantly haven't dried out. Check the stems and roots for any signs of damage or disease. Keep moist, but not wet, until planting.

Pot grown trees have the benefit of being available all year round, however its best to purchase and plant them in autumn in the cooler states, when the summer heat has gone but the soil is still warm enough to encourage some growth and settling before the winter cold arrives. In areas with humid summers, spring is ideal for establishing most trees.

Choose a healthy, strong fresh looking tree, with a solid stem. Avoid misshapen, sick or diseased growth as this is a sign of a poorly prepared or cultivated tree.

Faded labels, split or weedy pots are a sign the plant has been sitting around in the nursery for too long and the tree may be root bound and the tree stunted.
HOW TO CHOOSE TREES FOR Small Spaces

PURCHASING YOUR TREE

1 Preparation of the planting hole:
Hole size and depth are critical. The diameter of the hole should be no less than three times the size of the root ball. This reduces soil compaction and helps the roots to spread quickly. Generally, the depth should be no greater than that of the root ball.

The base of the hole should be loosened to allow root penetration. The shape of the hole is important. The hole should taper like a wide-rimmed bowl.

2 Root ball preparation:
Before planting, thoroughly soak the tree in a bucket of water or, even better, diluted seaweed extract.

A tube stock tree that is ready for planting should need no pruning or teasing. If the tree has congested roots, delicately tease them out or slice vertically with secateurs to prevent further spiralling of the roots.

3 Planting and backfilling:
Inoculating the soil with mycorrhizal fungi can greatly improve a tree’s uptake of nutrients, establishment time and success. Apply 5g of MycoGold below the root ball before planting.

Ensure the root ball is at the correct depth and centered in the hole. Try to use soil from the site to elevate the plant as necessary, as this is what the roots will grow into once established.

The addition of a small amount of compost is beneficial, but add no more than a third and combine well with the soil. Back fill and firm down thoroughly.

4 Watering:
The plant and hole needs to be watered well after planting to eliminate large pockets of air. Creating a basin of soil around the plant helps to keep the water around the root ball and mitigates runoff caused by hydrophobic soil or sloping sites.

Hand watering is best during establishment. Again, diluted seaweed extract is beneficial.

5 Mulching and fertilising:
Fertiliser is unnecessary for initial tree establishment in soils that are not nutrient deficient. Fertiliser is best applied a month or so after planting to avoid burning the new roots and to help promote deep root growth.

Mulch is crucial to keeping moisture in the soil and preventing weed competition. Be careful to keep it at about 5-7cm deep and clear of the actual tree trunk.

6 Staking of trees:
If you plant tube stock trees with a good strong central leader in well prepared soil, you should not stake them.

Staking is for stabilising advanced trees — it should not be used as a crutch as this leads to structurally weak specimens.

Staking is used to support tall trees while their roots establish, but they should still be allowed some movement to encourage trees to send out stronger roots, which will stabilise the tree at maturity. Stake at planting with 2-4 stakes positioned around the tree and, using a figure 8 or infinity pattern, weave a hessian webbing around the stakes and trunk to support the tree during establishment.
### Small Trees: How to Choose Trees for Small Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Evergreen</th>
<th>Deciduous</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Habit</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Soil Types</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snakebark Maple</td>
<td><em>Acer davidii</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>9m x 5m</td>
<td>Full Sun</td>
<td>Protected</td>
<td>Upright</td>
<td>Sandy, Clay, Dry, Moist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montpelier Maple</td>
<td><em>Acer monspessulanum</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>9m x 6m</td>
<td>Part Shade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Silk Tree</td>
<td><em>Albizia julibrissin</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>6m x 5m</td>
<td>Shade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry Tree - Grecian</td>
<td><em>Arbutus andrachnoides</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>6m x 6m</td>
<td>Protect. Windy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Cape Chestnut</td>
<td><em>Calodendrum capense alba</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapok</td>
<td><em>Ceiba speciosa</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 3m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Carob Tree</td>
<td><em>Ceratonia siliqua</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>7m x 10m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Judas Tree</td>
<td><em>Cercis silquastrum</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>6m x 4m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mexican Hawthorn</td>
<td><em>Crataegus pubescens</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>7m x 5m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pom Pom Tree</td>
<td><em>Dais cotinifolia</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>3m x 4m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Persimmon</td>
<td><em>Diospyros kaki</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>6m x 5m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Frangipani</td>
<td><em>Hymenosporum flavum</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 7m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heartnut</td>
<td><em>Juiglans ailantifolia</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 8m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Golden Rain Tree</td>
<td><em>Koelreuteria paniculata</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>6m x 4m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crabapple</td>
<td><em>Malus floribunda</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>5m x 5m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White Cedar</td>
<td><em>Melia azedarach</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>8m x 8m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Mulberry</td>
<td><em>Morus nigra</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 10m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Tupelo</td>
<td><em>Nyssa sylvatica</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>8m x 5m</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese Pistachio</td>
<td><em>Pistacia chinensis</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 8m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linden Tree</td>
<td><em>Tilia cordata</em></td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>10m x 8m</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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