

Ten Terrific Trees

Looking for a perfect tree for your garden? You can't go wrong with these Ten Terrific Trees. All provide year-round interest, require little or no maintenance, grow well in most garden conditions, and are disease/pest resistant. So don't hesitate – plant a tree this year for a lifetime of enjoyment!

***Acer* 'Pacific Sunset' – Pacific Sunset Maple**

'Pacific Sunset' is a perfect medium-sized maple tree. It is a hybrid that combines the best properties of its parents, *Acer truncatum* and *Acer platanoides* 'Warrenred'. 'Pacific Sunset' maple is a good choice for tough, urban conditions, growing to a mature size of 30 feet tall and 25 feet wide. It has an upright symmetrical shape, developing into a rounded crown, with dark green leaves that turn a mixture of yellow, orange, and red in the fall. 'Pacific Sunset' prefers full sun, but tolerates part shade; it is drought tolerant once established and grows in most soil types.

***Acer palmatum* – Japanese Maple**

Japanese maples are wonderful small trees. Delicate and airy, they make beautiful year-round focal points in any garden. Many varieties are available, ranging in size from small shrubs to medium-sized trees. Grafted, weeping forms are popular as container plants. Foliage colors include chartreuse, green, variegated, orange, and red. They have excellent fall color. Japanese maples grow well in most soil types, but need good drainage. Some varieties prefer filtered shade, while others prefer full sun. Most Japanese maples require supplemental water during prolonged dry spells. They are especially attractive when pruned to show off their attractive trunks and branches.

***Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* – Himalayan White Birch**

Jacquemontii birch trees are tall, pyramidal-oval shaped trees, desired for their brilliant white bark. They are also resistant to aphids and birch borers, the nemesis of other birch varieties. *Jacquemontii*'s yellow-green summer foliage turns golden in autumn. The striking, bare white branches in winter add year-round interest. *Jacquemontii* grows quickly to 40 feet tall, then more slowly to 60 feet tall and 30 feet wide. They grow in all soil types and are drought tolerant once established. Like all birches, *Jacquemontii* is a messy, litter-dropping tree – so don't plant them over patios or next to driveways.

***Calocedrus decurrens* – Incense Cedar**

Incense cedar is an easy-to-grow native of the Pacific Northwest. It is a tall, narrow evergreen tree with dark green foliage in flat sprays. Incense cedar foliage is intensely aromatic, especially in warm weather. These trees grow in all soil types, but prefer well-drained soils. Grow in full sun to part shade, and provide supplemental water until established – then they are quite drought resistant. Incense cedar is a medium-growing tree, reaching a mature size of 40 feet tall and 12 feet wide. They make an excellent backdrop for flowering trees and shrubs.

***Cornus kousa* – Chinese Dogwood**

Kousa dogwood is an excellent flowering tree with beautiful branch structure. It slowly grows into a dense,

spreading, horizontal crown, reaching a mature height of 30 feet and width of 25 feet. Kousa dogwoods flower after other dogwoods – in late spring, early summer. The large, four-petal flower bracts are held above dark green foliage. Flowers are followed by red, raspberry-shaped, dangling fruit in late summer. Several varieties of *kousa* are available, most with white flowers, some with pink. *Kousa* prefers well-drained, slightly acidic soil and partial shade – but will tolerate full sun. *Cornus kousa* is more resistant to dogwood anthracnose disease than other dogwood varieties.

***Metasequoia glyptostroboides* – Dawn Redwood**

Dawn redwood is a prehistoric conifer that thrived during the time of dinosaurs, and was thought to have died off with them. Happily it was discovered still living in China in 1944, and is available for our enjoyment today. Dawn redwood is a large, fast-growing deciduous conifer; its needles turn bronze and drop each fall. It is an upright, pyramidal tree with soft needles on fernlike branchlets; its small cones and open branch structure are very attractive in winter. Give this tree plenty of room – it quickly grows to 50 feet tall in only 15 to 20 years! It is unknown at what height it will mature in a garden environment (due to its recent discovery), but has attained 90 feet tall and 20 feet wide at the age of 40. Dawn redwood is a very adaptable tree, grows well in tough conditions, but does best in full sun with good soil and ample room to grow.

***Parrotia persica* – Persian Ironwood**

Persian ironwood is beautiful in every season. Its multi-trunked form with exfoliating bark provides winter interest, followed by beautiful spring foliage of bright green edged in crimson. Autumn colors are spectacular – changing from bronze to red to orange then gold during a long fall display. Persian ironwood is drought resistant once established, and does well in average soil, provided it is not soggy. This tree has a variable growth habit, but is usually taller than it is wide, typically growing to 20 to 40 feet tall and 15 to 35 feet wide.

***Pinus leucodermis* – Bosnian Pine**

Bosnian pine is a slow-growing tree with a strong central trunk, making it a perfect pine for home landscapes. Its tight, upright, pyramidal form and dark green needles are attractive year round. Bosnian pine grows well in all but soggy soils, and is drought tolerant once established. Plant this pine in full sun for best results. A mature Bosnian pine is 20 to 25 feet tall and 10 to 12 feet wide.

***Stewartia pseudocamellia* – Japanese Stewartia**

One of the most beautiful small trees, Japanese stewartia is an all-season performer. Mature trees develop multi-colored bark of pink, red-brown, and gray. Dark green spring foliage is followed by spectacular white, saucer-shaped flowers in midsummer. Fall foliage colors range from oranges to brilliant reds. Japanese stewartia prefers partial shade, but will take full sun if not too hot. It also prefers good, well-drained soil and adequate water. Japanese stewartia is a slow-growing, pyramidal tree; reaching 20 to 25 feet tall and half as wide in thirty years. It is a great tree for small spaces.

***Tsuga mertensiana* – Mountain Hemlock**

Mountain hemlock is the best native evergreen tree for Northwest home gardens. It is a slow-growing, slender, graceful small tree; growing to 20 feet tall and 8 feet wide in 30 years. Mountain hemlock likes good, well-drained garden soil. It grows well in full sun to partial shade, and is drought tolerant once established. Mountain hemlock also grows well in containers and alpine gardens.

Resources

Elizabeth C. Miller Botanical Gardens, Administrator. (2003 – last update). [Great Plant Picks](#). [February 18, 2003]

Brenzel, Kathleen Norris, ed. *Sunset Western Garden Book*, 7th ed., Menlo Park, CA: Sunset Publishing Corporation, 2001.

Barrick, William E., *American Horticultural Society 75 Great American Garden Plants*, Birmingham, Alabama: Oxmoor House, 1998.