

THE TREE LIST

Great Landscape Trees

For The Kansas City Region

(As Rated by Metropolitan Area Experts)

A study by Robert Whitman RLA, AICP, LEED AP

The Tree List: For The Kansas City Region (As Rated By Metropolitan Area Experts) was a study conducted by Robert Whitman, RLA, AICP, LEED AP, in which Kansas City area tree experts were asked to provide numerical ratings for over 380 trees in multiple categories. These ratings were averaged to determine the highest rated trees for each category. Some trees and categories have been added since that original study to provide additional information for users. This list shows all typically available trees, good and bad, to provide users with information on most tree options.

Study Participants:

Alan Branhagen, Director of Horticulture, Powell Gardens (former); **Bob Haines**, Arborist (dec.); **Cheryl Boyer**, Assistant Professor, K-State Extension; **Chip Winslow**, FASLA, KSU Department of Landscape Architecture (retired); **Chris Casebeer**, Green Valley Nursery; **Dan Simmons**; **Dennis Patton**, Johnson County Extension Agent; **Ivan Katzer**, Consulting Arborist; **Kevin Smith**, Forester, Johnson County Parks & Recreation (retired); **Mark Young**, Country Club Tree Service; **Michael Dougherty**, Tree Management Company; **Robert Whitman**, Landscape Architect, Multistudio; **Scott Reiter**, Linda Hall Library (dec.); **Susan Mertz**, Director of Horticulture, Powell Gardens; **Tim McDonnell**, Forester, Kansas Forest Service; and **Tory Schwope**, KAT Nurseries

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KEY

- * = Recommended Tree for the KC Region for general landscape use in favorable conditions and sites.
- Native Status = Trees native to local KC, the region near KC, distance U.S. areas or invasive trees to the area.
- Ratings = As scored by local experts. Some cultivars grouped and averaged with new trees added.
- Height/Lifespan/Comments = As scored/commented by local experts. Ecosystem Services added.

- 😊 = Super tree for this situation
- 🙂 = Good tree for this situation
- 😐 = Marginal tree for this situation
- 😞 = Poor tree for this situation

Native Status	General Landscape Recommended	Tree Name	Rating							Mature Height (ft.)	Exp. Lifespan (yrs.)	Comments
			Landscape Value	Street Tree	Climate Adaptable	Drought Tolerant	Ecosystem Services					
	*	<i>Acer buergerianum</i> - Trident Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	30	65	Good urban tree, not hardy north of KC.	
	*	<i>Acer griseum</i> - Paperbark Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	30	65	Great fall color, dramatic exfoliating bark.	
	*	<i>Acer miyabei</i> - Miyabe Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	40	65	Durable, pale yellow fall color.	
	*	<i>Acer miyabei</i> 'JFS-KW3AMI' - Rugged Ridge Miyabe Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	55	65	More narrow than species, also: 'State Street'.	
	*	<i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Bloodgood' - Red-leaf Japanese Maple	😊	😞	😞	😊	😊	😊	20	35	Good red foliage variety, for protected sites.	
Local	*	<i>Acer saccharum</i> 'Sugar Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	70	Good maple for irrigated sites & quality soils, common cultivars: 'Fall Fiesta', 'Bonfire', 'Green Mountain', 'Oregon Trail', 'Legacy'.	
Region	*	<i>Acer saccharum</i> v. <i>Caddo</i> - Caddo Sugar Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	40	70	Native variety to region, good selection for dry sites, common cultivars: 'Autumn Splendor', 'Flashfire', 'John Pair'.	
	*	<i>Acer truncatum</i> - Shantung Maple	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	25	70	Excellent small tree for KC.	
	*	<i>Acer x truncatum</i> - Sunset Maple cultivars	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	35	80	Medium size durable tree. Common cultivars: 'Pacific Sunset', 'Norwegian Sunset', 'Urban Sunset', 'Crimson Sunset'.	
Local	*	<i>Aesculus glabra</i> var. <i>arguta</i> - Texas Buckeye	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	25	70	More drought tolerant variety.	
Region	*	<i>Aesculus pavia</i> - Red Buckeye	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	15	50	Small tree, will bloom in shade. Buy in bloom to ensure best bloom quality.	
Hybrid	*	<i>Aesculus x carnea</i> - Red Horsechestnut	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	30	65	Vibrant red bloom, larger than <i>A. pavia</i> . Common cultivar: 'O'Neill's Red'.	
Local	*	<i>Amelanchier x grandiflora</i> 'Autumn Brilliance' - Apple Serviceberry	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	20	40	Most common in trade, single trunk trees often sucker, making multi-stem plants preferred. Also 'Robin Hill' cultivar.	
	*	<i>Carpinus betulus</i> - European Hornbeam	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	65	Clean shade tree that is underused.	
	*	<i>Carpinus betulus</i> 'Fastigiata' - Upright Hornbeam	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	30	65	Durable upright tree. Also 'Frans Fontaine'.	
U.S.	*	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> - American Hornbeam	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	30	65	Good shade tree alternative.	
Local	*	<i>Cercis canadensis</i> - Redbud	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	18	30	Common native, prefers understory, but can do well on most sites.	
Region	*	<i>Cercis canadensis</i> v. <i>texensis</i> - Oklahoma Redbud	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	18	30	Thicker foliage and enhanced tolerance of extremes.	
	*	<i>Chionanthus retusus</i> - Chinese Fringe Tree	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	15	45	Tighter bloom, thicker leaf than native species.	
U.S.	*	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> - White Fringe Tree	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	12	35	Good small or multi-trunk tree.	

The Tree List: Trees For the Kansas City Region (As Rated by Metropolitan Area Experts)
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Tree Name		Rating							Comments	
Native Status	General Landscape Recommended		Landscape Value	Street Tree	Climate Adaptable	Drought Tolerant	Ecosystem Services	Mature Height (ft.)	Exp. Lifespan (yrs.)	
Region	✱	<i>Cladrastis kentukea (lutea) - Yellowwood</i>	😊	😊	😞	😊	😞	50	50	Great bloom and smooth bark.
	✱	<i>Cornus controversa 'June Snow' - June Snow Giant Dogwood</i>	😊	😞	😞	😞	😞	30	25	Excellent form small tree for good or better soils
Region	✱	<i>Cornus florida - White Flowering Dogwood</i>	😊	😞	😞	😞	😊	15	40	Missouri state tree, native just east of KC, only for good, draining soils. Common cultivars: 'Rubrum', 'Cherokee Princess', 'Princess Emily'.
	✱	<i>Cornus kousa - Kousa Dogwood</i>	😊	😞	😞	😞	😞	20	40	More durable than natives for KC, common cultivars: 'Scarlet Fire', 'Stellar Pink', 'Celestial', 'Radiant Rose', 'Milky Way'.
	✱	<i>Cornus mas - Corneliancherry Dogwood</i>	😊	😞	😊	😊	😞	16	50	Edible fruit, very early yellow bloom.
	✱	<i>Eucommia ulmoides - Hardy Rubber Tree</i>	😊	😊	😊	😞	😞	40	50	Tough medium size tree, cultivar: 'Emerald Prairie'
	✱	<i>Ginkgo biloba - Ginkgo cultivars</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	50	100+	Low ecological value, beautiful, long lived tree, protect from bark damage. Common cultivars: 'Princeton Sentry', 'Autumn Gold', 'Magyar', 'Shangri-La', 'Presidential Gold'.
Local	✱	<i>Gymnocladus dioicus - Kentucky Coffeetree</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	95	Very tough species, Common fruitless cultivars: 'Expresso', 'Decaf'.
Region	✱	<i>Hamamelis virginiana - Common Witchhazel</i>	😊	😞	😊	😞	😞	20	35	Very early yellow bloom, underused, shrubby.
	✱	<i>Heptacodium miconioides - Seven-Son Flower</i>	😊	😞	😊	😞	😞	8	30	Very late bloom and racemes for autumn interest, multi-trunk tree.
Region	✱	<i>Maclura pomifera - Thornless/Fruitless Osage Orange</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	20	100+	Cultivars: 'White Shield', 'Wichita'. Excellent tree for difficult planting sites.
U.S.	✱	<i>Magnolia acuminata 'Butterflies' - Butterflies Magnolia</i>	😊	😞	😊	😞	😞	20	40	Vibrant yellow magnolia bloom. Also: 'Yellow Bird'.
	✱	<i>Magnolia liliiflora x stellata - Jane Magnolia</i>	😊	😞	😊	😊	😞	10	55	Good small magnolias with slightly later bloom than Star Magnolia. Cultivars: Ann, Betty, Jane.
U.S.	✱	<i>Magnolia virginiana - Sweetbay Magnolia</i>	😊	😞	😞	😊	😞	15	55	Fragrant, durable semi-evergreen, multi-trunk. Cultivar: 'Moonglow'.
		<i>Malus cultivars - Crabapple</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	20	40	Many colors and characteristics. All not equal. Common cultivars: 'Coralburst', 'Perfect Purple', 'Prairiefire', 'Royal Raindrops', 'Spring Snow', 'Sugartyme', 'Velvet Pillar', 'Red Jewell'.
	✱	<i>Malus sargentii - Sargent Crabapple</i>	😊	😞	😊	😞	😊	10	40	Very horizontal spreading character. Cultivars: 'Firebird', 'Tina'.
	✱	<i>Metasequoia glyptostroboides - Dawn Redwood</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	70	95	Option to bald cypress, Interesting deciduous needled conifer.
Region	✱	<i>Nyssa sylvatica - Blackgum cultivars</i>	😊	😊	😞	😊	😞	40	75	'Wildfire' is well proven. Common cultivars: 'Red Rage', 'Afterburner', 'Firestarter', 'Green Gable'.
Local	✱	<i>Ostrya virginiana - Amer. Hophornbeam</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	40	95	Good native woodland tree. Cultivar: 'Autumn Treasure'.
	✱	<i>Parrotia persica - Persian Parrotia</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	25	65	Excellent fall color, flower often freezes. Makes a good small shrubby tree.
Local	✱	<i>Quercus alba - White Oak</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	100+	Queen of the shade trees, best for quality soils.
Local	✱	<i>Quercus bicolor - Swamp White Oak</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	100+	Excellent tree for all large shade tree needs. Extremely high pH soils are a concern.
Region	✱	<i>Quercus coccinea - Scarlet Oak</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	90	Excellent tree for average or better soils.
Region	✱	<i>Quercus lyrata - Overcup Oak</i>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	100+	Excellent tree that needs more use.

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Local	★	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> - Bur Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	100+	Excellent tree for KC but has large nuts that may not be appropriate for urban sites.
Local	★	<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i> - Chinkapin Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	60	100+	Excellent native, large and wide tree. Best for non-irrigated sites.
Region	★	<i>Quercus pagoda</i> - Cherrybark Oak	😊	😊	😞	😊	😊	70	90	Excellent tree, should be used more.
U.S.	★	<i>Quercus prinus</i> (montana) - Chestnut Oak	😊	😊	😞	😊	😊	60	95	Very drought tolerant, needs good drainage.
Local	★	<i>Quercus rubra</i> - Red Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	95	Shumard may be better selection for urban sites
Local	★	<i>Quercus shumardii</i> - Shumard Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	95	Excellent urban shade tree.
Local	★	<i>Quercus stellata</i> - Post Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	100+	Beautiful tree, slow growing with tiny acorns.
	★	<i>Quercus × bebbiana</i> - Bebb's Oak	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	100+	Cross between White Oak & Burr Oak.
	★	<i>Quercus</i> var. - Columnar Types	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	45	85	Columnar oaks in the trade are excellent trees but are only partially native. Common cultivars: 'Kindred Spirit', 'Regal Prince', 'Scarlet Letter', 'Urban Pinnacle'.
	★	<i>Syringa reticulata</i> 'Ivory Silk' - Japanese Tree Lilac	😊	😊	😊	😞	😞	30	30	Durable blooming tree but not very long lived.
U.S.	★	<i>Taxodium ascendens</i> - Pond Cypress	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	50	100+	Interesting fine foliage compared to bald cypress. Cultivar: 'Prairie Sentinel'.
U.S.	★	<i>Taxodium distichum</i> - Bald Cypress	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	70	100+	Great urban tree, interesting deciduous needled conifer, gets very large, grows knees on wet sites
U.S.	★	<i>Taxodium distichum</i> - Columnar Bald Cypress	😊	😊	😊	😊	😞	50	100+	'Shawnee Brave' is a wide columnar tree, 'Lindsey's Skyward' is a narrow columnar tree.
Local	★	<i>Tilia americana</i> - American Linden / Basswood	😊	😊	😞	😊	😊	60	75	Native Linden/Basswood, excellent tree, not preferred by Japanese beetle, common cultivars: 'Boulevard', 'American Sentry'.
	★	<i>Tilia tomentosa</i> - Silver Linden	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	75	Excellent Linden, Cultivar: 'Sterling Silver'.
Local	★	<i>Ulmus americana</i> - American Elm cultivars	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	70	95	The king of urban trees past. Still excellent with DED resistant cultivars: 'Valley Forge', 'Princeton', 'Prairie Expedition', 'New Harmony'.
	★	<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i> - Lacebark Elm	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	60	Interesting bark, tough, fast growing, ice storm damage possible, cultivars: 'Allee', 'Emerald Prairie', 'Athena', 'Dynasty'.
	★	<i>Ulmus x</i> - Hybrid Elm	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	50	80	Many excellent, durable complex elm clones: 'Frontier', 'Accolade', 'Triumph', 'Commendation', 'New Horizon', 'Patriot'.
	★	<i>Zelkova serrata</i> - Japanese Zelkova	😊	😊	😊	😞	😞	50	40	Durable, fast growing urban tree with minimal ecological benefit. Common cultivars: 'Green Vase', 'Halka', 'Village Green'.
	★	<i>Zelkova serrata</i> 'Musashino' - Columnar Zelkova	😊	😊	😊	😞	😞	50	40	Columnar selection of Zelkova.