Tree Selection

Careful and well planned tree selection can ensure the future health of a tree.

It is important to match tree characteristics with the site and intended purpose of the planting. Well-chosen trees can increase property values up to 10% by adding curb appeal, especially when big specimen trees are present, and save up to 15% in energy cost.

Shape and form

First determine the function of a tree. Is it for shade, windbreak, privacy, aesthetics, or architectural elements? Then choose the best location in the landscape. The site should have enough space for the tree at maturity. Trees too large for the site can lead to future increased maintenance cost and possibly ruin the desired effect.

Colorful flowers

Trees selected for their architectural elements should have interesting leaf/flower color and shape, bark patterns and branching characteristics. When considering these characteristics, avoid placing a tree where flower petals, fruit, and leaf or bark litter falls on walkways or in ponds or pools.

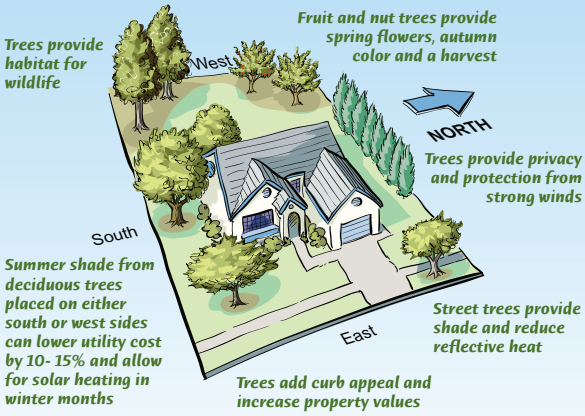
Leaf shape or fall color

Select tree species with genetic resistance to local common pest problems. Avoid selecting trees susceptible to root or crown rots. Inquire about pest resistance at local cooperative extension offices, retail nurseries or a certified arborist prior to selection to aid in best tree selection.

Interesting bark pattern

(see reverse)

Planting slow growing trees among fast growing trees can add longevity to a landscape. Typically slow growing trees live longer than fast growing ones that can be weak wooded and subject to limb failure. By mixing fast and slow growing trees, an instant landscape effect can be accomplished while slower growing trees add longevity.



Selection of a large deciduous shade tree on a west or south side of a house can provide shade and reduce utility costs by up to 15%. Trees placed to shade large areas of pavement reduce reflective heat making patios, walkways and streets cooler. Remember large trees have wide growing root systems and should be placed at least 15' away from a permanent structure.

Trees provide a habitat for wildlife by giving shelter and providing food. Selection of a fruit or nut tree can provide spring flowers, autumn leaf color and a harvest for wildlife and humans.

When choosing a tree, research local recommendations and consult with industry professionals for species options. Parks, botanical gardens, arboretums and private plantings can provide a close up look at a mature tree, which is helpful to get a realistic vision of a tree and its characteristics.

For more information refer to the ANR website at http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu, your local University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners or consult a certified arborist.

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