



Trees and Shrubs Featured in “Keep it Green”

Compiled by your host, Mike Kelley the Urban Forester!

THE TREES (in order of appearance):

Liquidambar styraciflua “sweet gum”

Sweet gum is a large, narrow tree with star-shaped leaves. This tree is drought tolerant and can be grown in fairly alkaline soils. One of its best attributes is its stunning fall color which can be purple, red, orange, and yellow in any combination or all of these colors at once! With decent soil, full sun, and adequate water this tree can grow 40 to 50 feet tall.

Acer rubrum “red sunset” maple

‘Red sunset’ is a compact, spreading/rounded tree that stays fairly small (20 to 30 feet) in the landscape. This tree has a spectacular red autumn color and is drought tolerant, can stand a fairly high pH, and is very cold-hardy.

Quercus palustris “pin” oak

Pin oak is a spectacular landscape specimen but they can be a little fussy to grow in our environment. This tree requires a lower pH than we usually have here in the Truckee meadows, but if you can keep your soil at a pH of 6 or less, you should be able to get this tree to grow to 40 feet tall! It has a rusty-red fall color and keeps its leaves in bronze clusters until spring.

Platanus acerifolia “London plane tree” sycamore

The sycamore is one of the largest, most majestic trees in any landscape, growing to 60 or 70 feet tall and 20 to 30 feet wide! It doesn’t have a whole lot of fall color but it makes up for it with a spectacular bark that peels and reveals a creamy green, mottled skin that is very attractive. Sycamore is one of America’s most beloved trees!

THE SHRUBS (in order of appearance):

Chamaecyparis obtuse “hinoki false cypress”

This native of Japan is a slender upright tree in dwarf form that will only get 4 feet tall. It is an evergreen with a scalloped frond that kind of resembles coral.

Picea glauca albertiana “dwarf Alberta spruce”

A compact, cone-shaped shrub that will only reach 6 to 8 feet high in 35 years!



Pinus balfouriana “foxtail pine”

Foxtail pine is a Sierra Nevada native that grows extremely slowly; it will stay shrub size through most of our lifetimes!

Sequoiadendron giganteum pendulum “weeping sequoia”

Weeping sequoia is one of those trees that really add character to your yard. If you plant two or more of them they always seem to be talking with one another like great, narrow, 25 foot tall friends!

Picea pungens glauca “koster” Colorado blue spruce

This spruce is an amazing blue-grey color. It adds a new dimension to your landscape winter or summer.

Pinus monticola. western white pine

The pine shown in the show is the dwarf version of this pine. It has soft, blue green needles that almost look artificial. This is a very drought tolerant selection and is perfect for small homes or condos.

Cedrus atlantica “glauca pendula” weeping atlas blue cedar

Atlas cedar is a true cedar unlike a lot of American cedars that are actually junipers. This weeping version can be trained with wire to grow in all kinds of interesting shapes!

FLOWERING PLANTS AND SHRUBS, (also in order of appearance)

Hibiscus moscheutos “perennial hibiscus” hardy hibiscus

Amazing flowers are the highlight of this perennial. The pink and white blossoms can be 12 inches across! The plant itself can grow to be 6-8 feet tall and 3 feet wide. They die down in winter but come back in spring and in our area, they need to be protected from the wind.

Syringa pubescens patula “miss Kim” lilac

Did you know lilac is a member of the olive family? This lilac is a compact, rounded bush with ice-blue blossoms.

Spiraea japonica “Anthony waterer” and Spiraea nipponica “snow mound”

These members of the rose family are popular because of their showy flowers; the Anthony waterer has carmine pink blossoms and the snow mound has beautiful baby’s-breath white flowers. Both of these shrubs bloom in late spring/early summer.

Berberis thunbergii “concord” Japanese barberry

Deep-purple outer color; this shrub can be used very effectively as a hedge, especially if you’re trying to keep someone out; it has thorns!



Hibiscus syriacus “satin blue” and “helene” Rose of Sharon

This shrub has awesome flowers all summer long; the satin blue is an astonishing blue/purple. Helene is a white flower with a red center; very pretty!

Festuca glauca, common blue fescue

Blue fescue is a simple, blue-grey, ornamental grass that grows in clumps about a foot high and 10 inches wide.

Potentilla fruticosa “gold drop” and “abbotswood” potentilla

Potentilla blooms from late spring to early fall. The gold drop variety has a stunning yellow flower while the abbotswood has a creamy white blossom. This is a great low-maintenance shrub that is quite drought tolerant.

Buddleja alternifolia, butterfly bush

Don't plant these unless you like butterflies, bees, and eye-popping purple flowers. Because you're going to get plenty of all of them!

Ask the Urban Forester at recinfo@cityofsparks.us.