



# Your landscape will thank you for choosing THE RIGHT TREE for the RIGHT LOCATION

Choosing the right tree for the right place will provide decades of benefits

By Mark Hughes

Trees are the most long-lived plants we grow – many live and enhance a landscape for 100 or more years if given a chance.

Because of their long lives and importance in a landscape, take care to select the best species for a situation. If the right tree is chosen and well cared for, it will establish and grow well. If the wrong tree is chosen, 5 to 10 years of precious tree-growing time may be lost before the mistake is realized.

## Decide Role of Tree in Landscape

Many homeowners make the mistake of deciding what kind of tree they want and then trying to fit it into their landscapes. A more positive approach is to decide where a tree is needed and what that tree should do in the landscape. Do you need a deciduous tree to provide shade in the summer but let the sunshine through in winter? Do you need an evergreen for winter interest and to provide year-round shelter from the wind? Should it provide habitat for wildlife? Are there buildings or utilities near that you need to keep in mind when considering tree size? What tree type (size, shape, color) will suit or enhance the landscape?



## Some alternatives to aspen to consider for fall color

- Amur maple
- Tartarian maple
- Bigtooth maple
- Autumn brilliance serviceberry
- Western river birch
- New Mexico privet

After the desired type of tree has been determined, then it is much easier to select a specific species that is adapted to your site conditions.

## Start with Climate-adapted Species

Begin by determining your property's climate zone. The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map is the standard by which gardeners and growers determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a locale. The map is based on the average annual minimum winter temperature divided into 10-degree F zones ranging from the

coldest of Zone 1 to the warmest Zone 13. Most of Wyoming is Zone 4, but some areas of the state are in Zones 3 and 5.

The hardiness zones determine cold hardiness only and do not account for other factors such as wind, soil type, soil moisture, humidity, snow cover, and winter sunshine.

## Select Long-lived Trees

Advertisements boasting fast-growing trees that provide quick shade and grow 5 to 8 feet or more a year are not uncommon. Many landowners soon discover that fast-growing trees have brittle wood, constantly drop lots of small twigs, suffer from insect and disease problems, and are prone to dieback from early fall frosts. Most fast-growing trees are



*These short-lived columnar poplars are rapidly declining after less than 20 years.*



*The top of this poorly placed spruce was removed to prevent roof damage.*

short-lived with some reaching their useful lifespan in as little as 20 years.

Hybrid poplars and hybrid willows are the most common. Many fast-growing hybrid poplars were developed for pulp and paper production and are not desirable landscape trees. Willows require plentiful moisture and are best used in native riparian plantings. Better-adapted trees with slower annual growth will require less maintenance and provide greater benefits for many decades.

### **Location, Location, Location**

Location is everything when planting a tree. Allow plenty of room for the tree to grow. A common tree-planting mistake is a seedling spruce tree placed right next to a building foundation. While that little seedling will benefit from the first few years of added protection, it will soon overgrow its space and rub against shingles and siding, not to mention roots pushing on house foundations resulting in an untimely removal.

Allow plenty of room for large trees to reach their mature size and to avoid future conflicts. As a general guideline, most medium and large trees should be planted a minimum of 15 to 20 feet from houses and

other structures. Evergreen trees should be planted on the north and northwest sides of a house to block cold winter winds. Avoid planting on the south side, which can block the warming sun in wintertime.

Aspen trees are beautiful, native trees and provide great benefits such as wildlife habitat in high-elevation areas. However, they can struggle in lower-elevation home landscapes.

In its native habitat, an aspen grove is created by suckers that shoot off the roots of a mother tree, which arrived at the site by seed. This suckering habit can be a nuisance in home landscapes, coming up in lawns and gardens. Aspen is also generally short-lived because of its susceptibility to numerous insects, disease, and cultural problems when planted outside of its natural, high-elevation habitat. When used in very high-elevation landscapes, aspens should be planted in clumps of several stems rather than as a single tree and in an area where new shoots can grow rapidly as the short-lived, older stems die out.

Also remember that common names given to tree varieties aren't always a good indicator of the true characteristics of a particular variety.

The very popular Canada Red Cherry is commonly planted throughout Wyoming. Many people don't realize this is not a sweet or pie cherry but rather a red leaf form of common chokecherry. The small, bitter fruit is the same as that of the parent common chokecherry.

### **A Little Planning, Lots of Success**

If you see a picture of a beautiful tree in a magazine or book, remember, the tree is healthy because it was planted in the right place. If your site conditions are not favorable for a selected species, do not be disappointed when a tree does not perform well.

A little planning before spring planting season will help you choose the right tree for the right place. A good reference to begin the selection process is "Trees for Wyoming." This is a comprehensive list of many types of trees growing in Wyoming.

The publication can be viewed at [www.barnyardsandbackyards.com](http://www.barnyardsandbackyards.com) (select Landscaping or you can pick up a copy at a Wyoming State Forestry district office).

Proper tree selection and placement will help reduce costly maintenance, enhance your property value, and provide healthier trees for your landscape.

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