

Belmont's Preferred Tree List

Trees bring great benefits to Belmont residents. They beautify our neighborhoods, provide shade, prevent heat islands, fight climate change, reduce stormwater runoff, increase biodiversity, improve our mood, and increase property values.

Belmont's Shade Tree Committee developed this list for residents, contractors, and town officials who are planting trees on public or private property. We hope it will help you decide which trees to plant and where to plant them.

In 2022, Belmont conducted a townwide tree inventory of trees along our streets and in public parks, around public buildings, and in cemeteries. Over 8,000 trees were identified, with an estimated value of \$17.3 million. This list is informed by the inventory's findings and recommendations.

The recommended trees were compiled from a variety of sources, including local municipal guides (Massachusetts, Cambridge, and Arlington), the Plainfield Tree Guide, the Native Plant Trust's list of keystone plants, and the Wild Seed Project, among others, with the goal of encouraging native planting and improving the biodiversity of Belmont. All trees on the list are native to the U.S., and most are native to Massachusetts.

Where to buy? Native trees and shrubs are available at local nurseries (Bigelow Nursery, Butterfly Effect Farm, Kings Tree Farm, Native Plant Trust, Northeast Nursery, Weston Nurseries) and online (Arbor Day Foundation, Wilson Bros. Gardens)

Why native plants? Native trees are likely to establish quickly and thrive, having adapted to the local environment over thousands of years. They have symbiotic relationships with native wildlife and create a vital and sustainable wildlife habitat. Pollinators – which support 35% of the world's food crop – need native plants to survive.

What's a keystone plant? Keystone plants are essential to our ecosystems because they support 90% of the caterpillar species that enable birds to reproduce, as well as all our specialist native bee species. Without them, flowering species would go extinct, and the food chain would collapse.

See a tree before you choose! Most of these trees are planted somewhere in town. Use the Belmont town tree inventory to search for a species and go see it in person.

Need to reach Belmont's Tree Wardens? Contact Jay Marcotte & Mike Santoro at 617-993-2680. "Right tree, right place"

Learn more: Check out these resources to learn more about tree planting & native plants:

Concord Tree Planting Guide

Plainfield Tree Planting Guide

Grow Native's Keystone Plant List

USDA: How to help pollinators

Native Plant Trust

Wild Seed Project

Common Name	Botanical Name	Native to MA	Height	Spread	Size	Street Tree	Conditions	Characteristics
Trees								
Aspen, quaking*	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	yes	30-70'	10-30'	tall	-	full sun; tolerates a range of soils	grows in dense colonies; striking white bark with yellow fall foliage
Basswood (American linden)	<i>Tilia americana</i>	yes	50-80'	30-50'	tall	street tree	full sun to part shade; tolerates some drought	flowers in June
Birch, paper	<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	yes	70'	50'	tall	-	part shade; continual moist soils; recommend planting in groups with trunks touching	white bark with yellow fall foliage
Birch, river	<i>Betula nigra</i>	yes	70'	60'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; medium to wet soil	fast growing
Birch, sweet	<i>Betula lenta</i>	yes	80'	40-60'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; tolerates clay soil and road salt	shiny, red-brown bark and yellow foliage
Birch, yellow	<i>Betula alleghaniensis</i>	yes	75'	60-80'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; medium to wet soil	silvery-bronze bark with yellow fall foliage
Black cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	yes	50-80'	25-40'	tall	street tree	medium, well-drained soil; full sun to part shade	supports numerous birds; profuse spring bloom
Black walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>	yes	75-100'	75-100'	tall	-	full sun; tolerates occasional drought	produces juglones that are toxic to some plants (azaleas, rhododendrons, etc)
Catalpa, northern	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>	no	40-60'	20-40'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; adaptable to adverse conditions	brittle branches; large, heart-shaped leaves; fragrant white flowers; long seed pods
Cedar, atlantic white	<i>Chamaecyparis thyoides</i>	yes	40-75'	30'-40'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; requires moist to wet soil	tall evergreen
Cedar, Eastern red	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	yes	30-65'	8'-25'	tall	-	full sun; can withstand many adverse conditions; drought and salt tolerant	dense evergreen conifer with blue-green berry-like fruits in fall
Cucumber tree	<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>	no	50-80'	40'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; medium moisture; intolerant of urban pollutants	wildlife value; big pinkish-red pods
Elm, American	<i>Ulmus americana</i> "Princeton" or "New Harmony"	yes**	60-80'	40-70'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt tolerant	distinctive upright form. use disease resistant cultivars only to avoid Dutch elm disease
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	yes	40'-60'	40'-60'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt tolerant	seeds scatter widely
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos var. iner</i>	no	30'-75'	25'-35'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt tolerant	thornless cultivars and cultivars without seed pods available; Small leaves provide filtered shade
Kentucky coffeetree	<i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i>	no	60'-75'	40-60'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt tolerant; drought tolerant	cultivars without seed pods available
Oak, bur	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	yes	60-80'	60-80'	tall	street tree	full sun; drought tolerant; intolerant of prolonged flooding	long lived; large acorns
Oak, chestnut	<i>Quercus montana</i>	yes	50-70'	50-70'	tall	street tree	full sun; tolerant of acidic soil; drought tolerant	glossy green leaves that resemble chestnut leaves
Oak, pin	<i>Quercus palustris</i>	yes	50-70'	40-60'	tall	street tree	full sun; requires acidic soil	distinctive, pyramidal form; resistant to anthracnose
Oak, red	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	yes	75'	75'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt and acidic soil tolerant	susceptible to oak wilt, resistant to anthracnose. does not produce heavy acorn crop until well into maturity
Oak, scarlet	<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	yes	50-70'	40-50'	tall	-	full sun; dry to medium soil	vibrant red fall foliage
Oak, swamp white	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	yes	50-60'	50'-60'	tall	street tree	full sun; salt tolerant; tolerates both wet soil and drought.	distinctive leaf coloring with dark green tops, and light green undersides

*Trees in bold are keystone plants that are essential for pollinators and the local ecosystem

**American elm is native to MA. However, due to Dutch elm disease, a cultivar must be used instead of the wild species.

Trees								
Oak, white	<i>Quercus alba</i>	yes	50 -80'	50 - 80"	tall	street tree	full sun, drought tolerant	red fall color; susceptible to anthracnose. acorns are an important wildlife food source
Pine, Eastern white	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	yes	80'	40'	tall	-	full sun; tolerates acidic soil; sensitive to air pollution and alkaline soils	fast-growing evergreen
Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	yes	60'	40'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; prefers moist soil but tolerates dry; needs root sucker pruning	yellow, orange and red fall colors
Shagbark hickory	<i>Carya ovata</i>	yes	70-90'	50-70'	tall	street tree	full sun; tolerates acidic soils	characteristic shaggy bark; produces edible nuts; supports 200+ moths & butterflies
Sourwood	<i>Oxydendron arboretum</i>	no	50'	20'	tall	-	needs full sun; moist well-drained soil; intolerant of drought and pollution	late bloomer; good fall foliage
Spruce, blue	<i>Picea pungens</i>	no	50'	16'	tall	-	full sun; tolerates light shade; medium moisture	naturally conical in shape; low-level draught tolerance once established
Sweet gum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	no	60-80'	40'-60'	tall	-	tolerant of wide range of conditions; likes full sun	can have prodigious gum balls
Sycamore, American	<i>Plantanus occidentalis</i>	yes	75-100'	75-100'	tall	-	full sun to light shade; medium to wet soil; tolerant of urban pollutants	brown bark peels to reveal white bark; susceptible to diseases, anthracnose and insects
Tulip tree	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>	yes	90'	50'	tall	-	full sun to part shade; moist soil	large yellow spring flowers; birds and hummingbirds love; prone to wind & ice damage
Tupelo (Black gum)	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	yes	50'	30'	tall	street tree	full sun to part shade; deep tap root; prefers moist soil but tolerates some drought	a stately tree with a straight trunk; no serious insect or disease problems
Arborvitae (Northern white cedar)	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	yes	40-60'	15'	medium	-	prefers full sun; weak stems in snow and ice	good for privacy; many smaller cultivars available
Birch, gray	<i>Betula populifolia</i>	yes	20-40'	10-20'	medium	-	full sun to part shade; needs medium to wet soil	non-peeling bark
Dogwood, flowering	<i>Cornus florida</i>	yes	30'	30'	medium	-	full sun to part shade; needs moist soil; intolerant of salt	a beautiful spreading tree with white flowers; susceptible to anthracnose
Hop-hornbeam, American	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	yes	25 - 40'	20-30'	medium	street tree	full sun to part shade; average, well-drained soil; intolerant of drought	green female catkins resemble the fruit of hops
Hornbeam, American (musclewood)	<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	yes	20-35'	20-35'	medium	street tree	part to full shade; tolerates full sun; prefers moist, organically rich soils	slow growing; forms attractive globular form
Redbud	<i>Cercis canadensis</i>	yes	30'	35'	medium	street tree	full sun to part shade; medium moisture	rose-purple flowers
Silver bell, carolina	<i>Halesia carolina</i>	no	30-40'	20-35'	medium	-	prefers medium, well-drained acidic, organically rich soil in full sun to part shade	attractive bell shaped flowers which attract hummingbirds; supports 7 species of lepidopteran caterpillars
Washington hawthorn	<i>Craetaegus phaenopyrum</i>	no	25-30'	25-30'	medium	street tree	prefers full sun but tolerates partial shade; tolerates urban pollution	spike-like thorns (1 to 3 inches); white flowers that turn into red fruit which last into winter
Yellowwood	<i>Cladastris kentuckea</i>	no	30-50'	40-55'	medium	-	full sun; medium moisture; branches susceptible to damage from snow/wind	hanging panicles of flowers in spring; yellow-orange fall color
Pagoda dogwood	<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	yes	15-25'	20-32'	small	-	full sun to partial shade; prefers acidic, rich loamy, moist, and well-drained soil	horizontal branches that form tiers; white flowers turn to blue/black fruit
Shadbush, downy (downy serviceberry)	<i>Amelanchier arborea</i>	yes	15-33'	15'-25'	small	street tree	full sun to part shade; tolerant of wide range of soils	early summer berries are eaten by over 40 species of birds and many mammals
Shadbush, Eastern (Canada serviceberry)	<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	yes	6-20'	15'-20'	small	street tree	full sun to part shade; tolerant of wide range of soils but prefers moist loams	white flowers; early summer berries are eaten by over 40 species of birds and many mammals

*Trees in bold are keystone plants that are essential for pollinators and the local ecosystem

Trees								
Shadbush, smooth (Allegheny serviceberry)	<i>Amelanchier laevis</i>	yes	15-25'	15'-25'	small	street tree	full sun to part shade; tolerant of wide range of soils	early white spring flowers, edible purplish-black fruit in late summer is attractive to many birds
Sweet bay magnolia	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	yes	10-35'	10-35'	small	-	full to part shade; medium to wet soil	late-blooming, fragrant white flowers; fleshy red fruit attractive to birds in fall
Shrubs								
Beach plum	<i>Prunus maritima</i>	yes	6-8'	4-6'	shrub	-	full sun; dry to moist soil; salt tolerant; thrives when planted in clusters	white, single or double flowers in small clusters; dull purple to crimson fruit in Aug-Oct; pits are toxic
Chokeberry, black	<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	yes	3-8'	3-6'	shrub	-	full sun to part shade; average moisture; drought and salt tolerant	white flowers in May; black berries in fall; purple/red fall foliage
Shadbush, dwarf (dwarf serviceberry)	<i>Amelanchier spicata</i>	yes	3-8'	3-8'	shrub	-	full sun to part shade; average to dry well-drained soil, preferably acidic	white flower, then reddish fruit, which turns deep purple-black when ripe; attracts birds
Hazelnut, American	<i>Corylus americana</i>	yes	10-16'	8-13'	shrub	-	full sun to part shade; moist to dry, well-drained soil; root suckers need to be trimmed	nuts are an important food source for hares, birds, squirrels, and many other animals
Hydrangea, smooth (American hydrangea)	<i>Hydrangea arborescens</i>	no	2-5'	3-5'	shrub	-	full sun to shade; average moisture; drought tolerant	flat-topped clusters of tiny, greenish-white flowers
Scrub oak (bear oak)	<i>Quercus ilicifolia</i>	yes	10-20'		shrub	-	full sun; shade intolerant; dry soil; tolerates poor soil; sensitive to salt	reddish-purple fall foliage; biennial acorns are bitter; provides nesting space & shelter for wildlife
Summersweet (sweet pepperbush)	<i>Clethra alnifolia</i>	yes	4-8'	4-6'	shrub	-	sun to part shade; medium to wet soil; salt tolerant; somewhat drought tolerant once established	fragrant white flowers
Witherod, smooth	<i>Viburnum nudum</i>	yes	6-12'	4-8'	shrub	-	full sun to shade; medium to wet soil	red color in autumn; winter berries
Witchhazel, American	<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	yes	15-20'	15-20'	shrub	-	blooms best in full sun; prefers moist soil	yellow strap-like flowers are among the last fall blooms; seeds are attractive to birds

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