



## An OBGA Series

# Deciduous Trees for Oklahoma

**Michael A. Schnelle**

Assistant Professor  
Extension Ornamentals/Floriculture Specialist

**Paul J. Mitchell**

Professor  
Ornamental Horticulture

**Dale M. Maronek**

Professor and Head  
Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Dept.  
Director, OBGA

The trees listed in this fact sheet should help guide the homeowner in making informed plant selections. Not all of the trees listed in this publication will necessarily thrive throughout Oklahoma, nor have all been listed which could be grown in various locations within the state. Also, keep in mind that all trees have inherent problems with various susceptibilities to diseases, insects and environmental stresses. The best policy is to strive for tree diversity in the home landscape. Try a variety of trees, not only to guarantee survivability of at least most of the plantings but also to increase the diversity which often enhances the aesthetic quality of the landscape.

It should be noted that trees pictured are not necessarily the best or only appropriate trees for Oklahoma, nor have they been listed in order of desirability. However, they have been found to perform above average throughout many areas of the state, and they are commercially available from most Oklahoma nurseries and garden center outlets. Other trees listed below, but not pictured, may grow equally well in numerous given sites throughout the state.

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets  
are also available on our website at:  
<http://www.osuextra.com>

### Ten tips for new tree care

1. Dig the planting hole 2-3 times the diameter of the tree's rootball.
2. Avoid digging the hole too deep since the tree should be planted at its original grade or slightly higher (1-2 inches above grade). If the tree is planted above grade it is important to cover the edges of the exposed rootball with soil tapered down to the surrounding soil line.
3. Fill in the planting hole with native soil and tamp lightly.
4. Do not overfertilize the new tree. A newly planted tree has a very limited capacity for utilizing fertilizer until it starts to establish itself.
5. Stake young trees (topheavy or planted in windy areas) when necessary but allow for sway. Remove all stakes after the first season if possible.
6. Avoid overpruning new trees. Leave lower limbs intact the first season if possible.
7. Keep a 5-6 feet weed- and turf-free circle around the tree. Place an organic mulch 1-3 inches deep around the tree.
8. Apply at least one inch of water weekly.
9. Wrap young trees as fall approaches. Tree wraps protect tender bark from rodent damage and environmental stresses as a result of temperature fluctuations. One should note that some young trees benefit from summer wrapping to avoid sunscald.
10. Winter irrigate, when temperatures remain above freezing for more than a few days, to avoid dehydration injury.

## Chinese pistache

(*Pistacia chinensis*) is 25-35 feet at maturity. It has pest free foliage with attractive red or blue fruit on the females. It has an excellent orange-red fall color. Prune out the narrow forks when young. It is medium in growth rate and becomes rounded in habit at maturity and is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 6 to 9).



## Shumard oak

(*Quercus shumardii*) is 50-75 feet at maturity with shiny dark green foliage, and it is a pest free plant. It is not as susceptible to chlorosis (yellowing) as Pin Oak. It has a reddish-yellow fall color and medium in its growth rate. It is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 5 to 9).



## Lacebark elm

(*Ulmus parvifolia*) is 40-60 feet at maturity and has pest free glossy leaves. It may have good yellow fall color and has attractive red fruit. It has exceptional brownish-orange mottled bark. Prune out the narrow forks when young. With irrigation and fertilization, the growth rate will be fast. It becomes rounded at maturity. It is an excellent disease-free substitute for the American Elm and is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 4 to 9).



## Bald cypress

(*Taxodium distichum*) is 50-80 feet at maturity with fern-like foliage. It is drought tolerant and is reddish-brown in fall color. It has attractive, rounded fruit. It becomes pyramidal at maturity and is medium to fast in growth rate. It may grow "root knees" in wet sites and is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 4 to 9).



## Common hackberry

(*Celtis occidentalis*) is 40-70 feet at maturity. It is a very tough, ideal tree for difficult sites (drought). It has an occasional yellow fall color. It is susceptible to nipple gall, which will not harm the plant but may be unsightly. It has a medium to fast growth rate and is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 2 to 9). Pictured is a related species, *C. laevigata* (Sugarberry).



## Redbud [pictured is *C. canadensis* 'Alba' (Whitebud)]

(*Cercis canadensis*) is 20-30 feet at maturity. It is the state tree of Oklahoma and has durable green foliage and bright pinkish-purple flowers in spring. It has occasional yellow fall color. It has cinnamon-orange bark at maturity. The Redbud is particularly susceptible to herbicide injury (2,4-D). It can also be purchased with purple leaves; ask for 'Forest Pansy' redbud or look for double flowering types or those with white flowers (whitebud).



## Golden raintree

(*Koelreuteria paniculata*) is 30-40 feet at maturity and has attractive foliage with beautiful yellow flowers in summer and occasional yellow fall color. It has attractive "Chinese lantern-like" fruit and is an extremely adaptable tree. It becomes rounded in habit at maturity and is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 4 to 9).



## River birch

(*Betula nigra*) is 40-70 feet at maturity and has attractive foliage with a showy, reddish-brown and white exfoliating trunk. It prefers moist soils and grows pyramidal to rounded in habit. It has a medium to fast growth rate. It grows in zone 4 to 9 (eastern Oklahoma native).



## Ginkgo

(*Ginkgo biloba*) is 40-70 feet at maturity and has unique fan-shaped leaves. It has beautiful golden fall color and is extremely adaptable. It is pest free and is pyramidal to widespreading in habit at maturity. It is slow growing. Choose male selections to avoid foul smelling fruit. It is hardy east of Highway 81 (zone 3 to 9).



## Possumhaw

(*Ilex decidua*) is 10-25 feet at maturity with shiny green foliage (native, deciduous holly) and attractive red fruit that persists. It can be grown as a shrub or small tree, and there are many improved varieties available. It grows best east of Highway 81 (zone 4 to 9).



## Sweetgum

(*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is 50-75 feet at maturity with shiny star-shaped leaves and exceptional yellow-orange-red-purple fall color. It has messy fruit with prickly spines. It should be grown in the eastern half of the state and prefers moist soils. There are many improved varieties available and most become rounded in habit at maturity (zone 5 to 9).



## Amur maple

(*Acer ginnala*) is 15-20 feet at maturity with shiny three-lobed leaves. Some varieties have attractive red fruit. Ask for varieties with red fall color. It is quite adaptable and pest free and becomes rounded in habit at maturity. It too is hardy throughout Oklahoma (zone 3 to 8).



## Other deciduous trees for Oklahoma\*

### Trees for wet sites

Red maple  
River birch  
Bald cypress  
Willow  
Sweetgum

### Trees for difficult (droughty) sites

Common hackberry  
Winterberry  
Bur Oak  
Soapberry  
Chittimwood  
Osange orange  
Lacebark elm  
Desert willow  
Fruitless mulberry  
Japanese tree lilac

### Trees for small sites or large containers (architectural pottery)

Golden raintree  
Amur maple  
Tatarian maple  
Japanese maple  
Possumhaw  
Oklahoma redbud

### Trees for showy flowers

Saucer magnolia  
Star magnolia  
Golden raintree  
Japanese pagodatree  
Japanese tree lilac  
Crabapple  
Redbud  
Flowering dogwood

### Trees for showy fruit

Chinese pistache  
Soapberry  
Hawthorne  
Crabapple  
Possumhaw  
Winterberry

### Trees for fall color

Chinese pistache  
White ash  
Ginkgo  
White oak  
Red oak  
Callery pear cultivars  
Red maple  
Caddo Sugar maple  
Tatarian maple  
Amur maple

\* This is only a partial list of trees suitable for Oklahoma. Some will thrive better than others depending upon conditions and access to supplemental irrigation and fertilization. It is important to remember that there is no substitute for consulting with a local certified nursery professional for his or her advice on species, cultivars and varieties that will grow particularly well in specific Oklahoma locations. The plants listed above are merely an initial guide in selecting trees for a landscape.

For detailed information on a wide variety of trees for Oklahoma, Circular E-897 may be ordered or purchased at any Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Office.

## Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum



The mission of the Oklahoma Botanical Garden and Arboretum (OBGA) is to serve the people of Oklahoma as coordinator and developer of educational and scientific activities pertaining to the role, function, and importance of plants and proper design in their lives. OBGA is an integral part of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sam E. Curl, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of 20 cents per copy. 0803