



Fall is not only a great time to enjoy a pumpkin spice latte, it's also a great time to plant trees. Severe weather, drought, poor planting practices or species selection, insects, disease and an aging tree population all have contributed to the decline in the number of community trees across the state. Planting new trees is an essential part of maintaining Nebraska's community forest, and fall planting offers important benefits.

Just because we are a 'Prairie State' doesn't mean that we don't have or need trees. Across Nebraska, there are about 470,000 acres of community forests. These trees provide benefits like cleaner air, healthier soil, and wildlife habitats. Planting a tree provides much-needed shade during hot Nebraska summers, which helps reduce energy costs for homeowners, schools, and businesses.

It may not seem like it, but fall is an optimal time for tree planting. Fall is a great time to plant trees in Nebraska because it allows trees to establish their root systems and get a jump start on spring growth. It also means less heat stress and possibly less watering for the installer, not to mention cooler temperatures.

Species diversity is key when selecting a new tree. It's recommended to diversify the landscape so that no single species makes up more than 10% of the landscape. There are many benefits to diversifying the landscape. Don't only think about the aesthetic qualities that a diverse landscape has to offer, also think of the 'putting all of the eggs in one basket' saying. If a disease or insect was to come in, infect or infest, it could potentially wipe out a species of tree. We have learned this in recent years the hard way with pine wilt infecting our Scotch and Austrian pines and the confirmation of Emerald Ash Borer affecting ash. Starting now to diversify the landscape can help to ensure many useful years out of the landscape.

When selecting a tree species, considering a couple of key factors. Plant a different species than what is already growing in the neighborhood. Select a tree for your yard that provides some variety in leaf texture, form and fall color to create a diverse landscape year-round. Always take a tree's mature height and width into consideration when selecting a species for planting. Also look for any above ground utilities, sightlines for the street and windows, and select the right tree for the growing conditions. Always call Diggers Hotline (811) at least 3 days before you do any digging.

In addition to diversifying the landscape, adding trees to the landscape can also save you money. Over a 40-year period the net benefit of having a tree is amazing. The size of the tree can make a difference in the amount of benefit to a yard. A small tree can provide a net benefit of \$600, a medium tree \$1,360, and a large tree can provide a net benefit of over \$3,000.

If you are looking for a good tree to plant, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum has a list that is a good place to start. The 'Trees for Western Nebraska' list includes underutilized tree species organized by mature height and can be found at the following link <https://go.unl.edu/treesforwesternne>. Below are just a few to consider:

Evergreen- Douglas fir—*Pseudotsuga menziesii*, Black Hills spruce-- *Picea glauca var densata*, Ponderosa Pine—*Pinus ponderosa*, Limber pine—*Pinus flexilis*

Small to Medium Deciduous Trees- Shantung maple—*Acer truncatum*, Miyabe maple—*Acer miyabei*, Gamble Oak- *Quercus gambelii*, Japanese or Pekin Tree lilac-*Syringa reticulata* ('Ivory Silk'), Hophornbeam—*Ostrya virginiana*

Large Deciduous Trees- Kentucky coffeetree—*Gymnocladus dioica*, Northern catalpa—*Catalpa speciosa*, Baldcypress—*Taxodium distichum*, Bur oak—*Quercus macrocarpa*, Chinkapin oak—*Quercus muehlenbergii*, English Oak—*Quercus robur*, Elm hybrids—*Ulmus x* ('Accolade', 'Cathedral', 'Frontier', 'New Horizon', 'Pioneer', 'Triumph', 'Vanguard'), Black or Bigtooth Maple- *Acer nigrum* or *Acer grandidentatum*, Hackberry—*Celtis occidentalis*

Take advantage of the cooler weather and add some variety to the trees in your neighborhood, it will pay off in the long run.

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