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Choosing the Right Tree for Your Site.

*Choosing the right tree for your soil, light and moisture conditions will help ensure your trees thrive. All the species listed are native to southern Ontario, except for a few 'naturalized' species proven to do well in our region (*non-native species are indicated with an Asterix). Native species are adapted to local environmental conditions, requiring far less water and care than many non-native varieties. Additionally, they have evolved as part of native ecosystems and provide vital habitat for wildlife including birds, mammals and insects.*

Species	Site Preferences	Characteristics	Values
Balsam Fir	Prefers moist sites, with acidic to neutral soils (pH 5.0-7.0). Very tolerant of shade, often grows as an understory species.	Medium sized coniferous tree. Identify by its flat needles (1.0-2.0 cm length) branching from 2 sides of the twig and its distinct sweet smell. Tall, narrow conical shape.	Provides food and cover for many wildlife species, including deer and grouse.
White Birch	Tolerates moderately dry to very moist sites. Grows in a wide variety of soils, with best growth in nutrient rich soils. Intolerant of shade.	Deciduous tree easily identified by its unique white 'papery' bark. Tends to grow 'up' in height from one central stem, rather than branching 'out' in width.	Seeds and catkins provide food for many birds, including redpoll, pine siskin, chickadee and ruffed grouse. Leaves are eaten by hares.
Black Cherry	Tolerates a range of sites, best growth on deep, infertile acidic soils (sandy loam to loam). Poor growth on very wet and very dry sites. Intolerant of shade, except as a seedling.	Deciduous tree identified by its scaly dark brown bark, simple long oval leaves with finely-toothed margins, small white/pink flowers in early spring and small dark fruit in fall.	Fruit and seeds are important food source for many species of wildlife.
Eastern White Cedar	Grows best in moist fertile soils but will grow in wet to very dry conditions. Tolerates shade.	Flat, scale-like leaves, dense light green foliage, distinctive smell. Naturally conical in shape, can be easily pruned. Up to 20m height.	Effective hedge and windbreak species. Provides bird habitat and is a food source. A significant cover species for deer during heavy snow.

Tamarack	Tolerates wet, poorly drained sites, grows best on moist, loamy soils. Needs full sunlight.	A deciduous-coniferous species (loses its foliage during winter). Foliage is in whorls of soft, short, bluish-green needles. Foliage turns brilliant yellow in autumn. Bears small cones (1.0 cm).	Visually attractive conical shape and brilliant yellow colour in the fall. Seeds provide food for birds.
*European Larch	Native to Europe but naturalized in Southern Ontario. Grows well on a variety of sites, including dry sites. Needs full sun.	A deciduous-coniferous species (loses its foliage during winter). Similar in appearance to native Tamarack but distinguished by its larger cones (2.0-5.0 cm) and growth on drier sites.	Visually attractive conical shape and brilliant yellow colour in the fall. Seeds provide food for birds.
Sugar Maple	Grows well in fertile well drained sites, loam soils. Very tolerant to shade.	Large trees reaching 30m in height. Develops wide round canopy when open grown.	Our National tree. Attractive fall colours produced by tree before dropping leaves. Maple syrup values.
Red Maple	Grows well on variety of soils, including moist to wet sites. Moderately shade tolerant.	*wilted leaves are poisonous for horses. Medium sized tree. Flowers in late winter to early spring, produces seeds in May-June. Leaves turn bright red in early autumn.	Provides pollen for pollinator species in early spring. Produces attractive fall colours before dropping leaves in autumn.
Silver Maple	Moist to wet, fertile sites. Tolerates flooding. Most common on organic soils. Tolerant to moderately tolerant of shade.	Large, fast growing deciduous tree, hybridizes with Red Maple. Leaves are deeply notched. Produces seeds in May-June.	Large winter flower buds are excellent food source for squirrels. Used for erosion control, ornamental planting.
Bur Oak	Best growth on moist sites but will tolerate a wide range. Intolerant of prolonged flooding. Tolerates some shade.	Large tree. Bark develops characteristic 'corky ridges', acorns mature by early fall with a large 'hairy' cap attached.	An excellent source of food for wildlife. Used for ornamental planting, lumber and firewood.
Red Oak	Best growth in well drained sandy-loam soils. Moderately shade-tolerant, seedlings require full sunlight.	Large trees. Wide branching when open grown. Produces acorns.	Habitat tree. Acorns are a key food source for wildlife.

White Oak	Tolerates a variety of sites and soils, prefers moist fertile sites. Tolerates some shade. At the northern edge of its range: grows best in deciduous and Carolinian forest regions of Ontario.	Large, long lived tree. Will develop a wide round canopy when grown in the open.	Acorns are an excellent food source for many bird and mammal species. Seedlings are preferred 'browse' for deer.
*Hybrid Poplar	Will tolerate a variety of sites including very dry, nutrient poor and gravelly sites.	Very fast-growing tree! Carolinian species cloned from cuttings of parent trees displaying superior growth and vigor. Reproduces naturally from root suckers. Needs full sun. Lives 50-90 yrs.	Popular for fast growing fencerows. Stands of poplar provide excellent habitat for many wildlife species. Bark is preferred food for beavers.
Red Pine	Best growth on acidic, sandy well drained soils. Intolerant of shade, requires full sun. Mature trees are in tolerant of 'free carbonates' in soil.	Large tall trees. Long needles in bundles of 2. Unique scaly bark colouring of reddish to pink. Lower branches are self-pruning when grown in stands.	Common for large area field plantings, less common for windbreaks. When managed, produces a high value plantation product.
White Pine	Suitable species for wide variety of soils – fresh to well drained. Grows in open and filtered sunlight.	Medium length needles in bundles of 5. Bark is scaly, dark grayish-brown in colour. Our tallest tree, 40m or greater in height.	Our provincial tree. Seeds provide food for birds and small mammal. Common for large area field plantings.
*Colorado Spruce	Grows best on acidic loamy, moist soils. Moderate tolerance towards salt and shade	Non-native to Southern Ontario. Densely foliated, slow growing tree. Develops 'blue' needles as it ages, especially on acidic, fertile loams. Similar native species: White Spruce.	Excellent for ornamental plantings or to create privacy windbreaks
*Norway Spruce	Grows best on loamy, moist soils. Lower tolerance to shade and heavy soils than white spruce.	Native to Europe but naturalized in Southern Ontario. Medium to large tree. Fastest growing of the spruces common to southern Ontario. Develops 'drooping' branches when mature. Similar native species: White Spruce.	Good tree for windbreaks. Regular seed crops and dense foliage make it a good wildlife tree for both habitat and food.
White Spruce	Grows in well to moderately well drained soils. Tolerant of heavy	Medium to large tree. Densely foliated with short stiff needles.	Effective species for windbreak planting. Seeds are an important food source for birds and small mammals.

	soils (clay). Intermediate shade tolerance.		
Sycamore	Moist to wet sites, will not tolerate flooding. Best growth on neutral, fertile sandy loams. At the northern edge of its range: grows best in deciduous and Carolinian forest regions of Ontario.	Distinctive smooth, patchy bark with creamy white, red and green colouring. Leaves are similar to maple but with much shallower notches. Seeds packed in a dry, 1" single fruit.	Attractive, wide branching tree. Seeds provide food for some birds.
Black Walnut	Prefers moist, fertile loams. Typical of deep, well drained river banks and bottomlands. At the northern edge of its range: grows best in deciduous and Carolinian forest regions but will grow throughout Southern Ontario. Intolerant of shade.	Large tree develops wide branching canopy when open grown. Produces 'juglones' which inhibit the growth of some other species. Produces large, thick hulled walnuts in fall.	Nuts provide food for many wildlife species.
Tulip Tree	Prefers sand and sandy-loam soils, moist to moderately dry sites. Intolerant of shade (full sun). At the northern edge of its range: grows best in deciduous and Carolinian forest regions of Ontario.	Tall tree. Similar growth habit to poplar (apically dominant). Flowers May-June, 2 ½" yellow/green blooms. Begins flowering at 8-15 years	Beautiful, fragrant 'tulip shaped' flowers. Seeds provide food for wildlife. Flowers attract pollinators (bees, butterflies).
Shrubs:			
American Mountain Ash	Grows in a variety of soils, prefers moist sites but will tolerate dry sites. Full sun to part shade.	Not a true ash species. Small tree, growing up to 10m. Large compound leaves. Produces clusters of white flowers in May-June and orange berries in fall.	Attractive as an ornament. Berries are a food source for many birds.

Highbush Cranberry	3' to 8' shrub found throughout Ontario on a variety of site. Moderate shade tolerance.	White flowers in June produce soft red fruit that is persistent through winter. Similar species: non-native European Highbush Cranberry.	Attractive as an ornamental. Fruit used by birds and other wildlife (fruit non-native European Highbush Cranberry is not).
Red Osier Dogwood	3' to 5' shrub found throughout southern and central Ontario. Likes moist sites in full sun. Often found in or near ditches.	Red branches and stems prominent in winter. Cream colored flowers are followed by white berries ripening in September to October.	Red branches are attractive as winter ornamental. Good wildlife food and cover. Plant together in a clump.
Black Elderberry	Prefers moist sites but will tolerate most sites. Grows best in full sun to part shade.	Large shrub growing up to 10'. Stems are soft and corky. Produces large sweet-smelling white flower clusters and dark purplish-black fruit. Can be pruned back significantly to control height.	Attractive as an ornamental. Flowers attract birds, bees and butterflies. Berries are excellent food source wildlife. Flowers and berries are edible to humans, but all other parts of the plant are poisonous.
Juneberry (Serviceberry)	Best growth in moist fertile well drained sites, will tolerate a variety of sites. Will grow in full sun or as an understory species.	Small tree with beautiful white-pink flower clusters and small edible fruits. Leaves turn a brilliant apricot colour in fall.	Widely planted as an ornamental. Fruits are edible, and a valuable food source for wildlife.
Nannyberry	Tolerates a wide range of sites and soil types. Grows well in full sun or part shade.	Large deciduous shrub. Produces creamy white flower clusters in late spring and blueish-black berries in fall.	Attractive as an ornamental. Flowers attract birds, bees and butterflies. Berries are excellent food source for birds and other wildlife.
Staghorn Sumac	Grows in open, sunny places. Tolerates many sites, including dry nutrient poor sites (gravelly ditches, roadsides and hillsides).	Large shrub with many velvety stems originating from the base. Large compound leaves turn brilliant red in the fall. Distinct upright 'cones' of reddish-brown hairy fruit in fall.	Attractive as an ornamental. Fruits have a sour, lemony taste and are sometimes used to make teas. Fruits are eaten by birds and some mammals during winter.

Fruit Trees	Fruit	Growing conditions.
Apple: Cortland	Similar to a Macintosh (cross between a Macintosh and a Ben Davis). Large, round, red apple with 'orange stripes'. Mild and sweet with crisp texture. Good for eating and pies, sauce, baking.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Apple: Honey Crisp	Large size fruit. Very crisp, sweet and juicy. Best eaten fresh.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Apple: Ida Red	Medium sized bright red apple. Tart, keeps flavor when baked. Good for eating fresh, or pies, sauce, baking.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Apple: Macintosh	Medium sized apple, red with green splash of colour. Mildly tart, sweeter as it ripens. Excellent for most uses.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Apple: Golden Russet	One of Ontario's oldest varieties. Sweet and tangy with rough, golden-brown skin. Great for eating and baking.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Apple: Northern Spy	Large, sweet, crisp apple. Elongated shape. Best for pies sauce and baking.	Cold hardy to most Ontario planting zones.
Pear: Bartlett	Pale green to yellow pear, with thin skin and yellow-white flesh. Elegant, long shaped fruit. Sweet and juicy when ripe.	Cold hardy to zone 5b. Most pears are considered 'self-unfruitful'
Pear: Flemish Beauty	Small, smooth green pear with red blush. Firm, juicy and slightly granular flesh white flesh.	<i>Most</i> cold hardy Ontario pear cultivar (zone 5b). Most pears are considered 'self-unfruitful'
Cherry: Montmorency (sour)	Most common tart or 'sour' cherry. Medium sized bright red cherry with yellowish flesh. Excellent for pies, preserves and eating.	Cold-hardy hybrid species (zone 5b). Flowers later in the season, fruits mid to late July. Self-fertile.
Cherry: Stella (sweet)	Large, dark-red, sweet fruit.	Limited hardiness beyond zone 7b: Early blossoms may be frost killed in colder zones. Fruits mid to late July. Consider planting in a sheltered area or warmer micro-climate. Self-fertile*

***Self-unfruitful:** requires a second, compatible variety for cross pollination (Bartlett pear and Flemish Beauty pear are compatible).

***Self-fertile:** does not require a second variety for cross pollination.