Basic planning should include determining the location and shape of the planting beds; the need for decoration, shade, screen or windbreak; and the consideration of other home and garden activities. Once the basic plan has been determined, then selection of plants can proceed.

Selecting trees and shrubs for landscape use is similar to selecting other items for the home and garden. The more you know about the product you intend to buy, in this case trees and shrubs, the more likely you will be satisfied with the end results. Information should include not only desirable characteristics but also those features that might have an influence on the performance and suitability of the plant as it develops and matures.

Sources of this information should be varied. Numerous garden books are available. A partial listing of useful books is given at the end of this chapter. Additional information is often available through cooperative extension offices and is especially helpful in providing information on the local performance of specific trees and shrubs.

Where possible, I recommend that every effort be made to see the living plant before final selection is made. This means visits to a garden center or local nursery, a botanic garden or arboretum, or, in some cases, to a neighbor who has the plant growing in his landscape plantings.

All sorts of information should be assembled about trees and shrubs before final selections are made. Most of the rest of this chapter is devoted to the things to look for.

Winter hardiness potential is of special significance for woody plants in most sections of the United States. Trees and shrubs differ in their ability to tolerate the cold of winter, and hardiness ratings have been established for most kinds. However, this information for newer introductions may be lacking.

Most books give a winter hardiness rating for each plant covered. This should be carefully noted for each kind of plant considered for landscape use.
Plants used in key locations in the planting should be completely winter hardy. Less hardy kinds can be used but they should be restricted to smaller numbers and more protected locations.

The mature size of trees and shrubs is an important consideration. Several sizes are available for landscape use. Selection of the proper size will avoid overcrowding, excessive shading, or other undesirable results.

Trees can be selected that are large (60' +), medium (30' to 50'), or small (15' to 30') in size at maturity. On most properties, large trees should be used sparingly and located carefully for maximum efficiency in shading. Small trees are useful for small properties and many have outstanding seasonal interests.

Shrubs also are available in three sizes, large (8' to 15'+), medium (4' to 5'), and small (1' to 3'). Large shrubs are best in border or screen plantings. Medium and small kinds can be used effectively in foundation plantings near the home, where even at maturity they can be expected to remain in scale with minimum maintenance requirements.

Shape (outline of the plant) and branching habit (arrangement of branches within the outline) vary considerably among trees and shrubs. These characteristics can add distinctive features to a landscape planting.

Different shapes available include round, oval, ovate (broadest below the middle), obovate (broadest above the middle), broader than high, conical, columnar, and irregular. Branching habits include upright-narrow to spreading, upright-arching, horizontal, pendulous, and irregular.

Plant density is important when selections are being made for screening or barrier purposes. Dense-compact plants are particularly suited for this purpose and a number of kinds, both trees and shrubs, are available with these characteristics. On the other hand, if plants with a loose-open characteristic are needed, these kinds are available also.

Foliage characteristics include duration, color, and texture. Both trees and shrubs have kinds that are evergreen (foliage persists more than one year) and others that are deciduous (foliage drops at the end of the growing season). Evergreen kinds may be either broadleaved or narrowleaved and they are particularly suited for screening purposes.

Variation in foliage color is available in both evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs.

For the most part, green or shades of green should make up the bulk of foliage color in a landscape planting. However, other foliage colors can create a feeling of more space, brighten a dark corner, or serve as the accent feature of a specimen plant. Colors available include reddish-purple, blue, gray-green, yellow, and various combinations of yellow, white, and green in variegated forms.

Texture (variation in leaf size) can also be used for interesting landscape effects. Those kinds with coarse texture (large leaves) and fine texture (small leaves) are particularly distinctive.

Most trees and shrubs are selected for landscape plantings on the basis of

Author Robert G. Mower is Associate Professor, Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
their seasonal interests of flower, fruit, and fall color. While these characteristics are very important, they should be considered in the context of the other plant characteristics discussed previously and with the total landscape setting in mind. In this way, a balanced and effective garden setting can be developed.

A wide array of shrubs and small trees with showy flowers are available for landscape use. Colors range from white to yellow, red, orange, blue, and purple. While most bloom in the spring, it is possible to select kinds that flower at different times. These will provide nearly continuous bloom throughout the growing season.

All trees and shrubs are not showy when in bloom, so some care in selection is important if showy flowers are desired.

Attractive fruits are also an important and useful seasonal interest of trees and shrubs. They are usually most prominent in late summer and early fall, but some kinds persist well into winter and are very effective when other interests may be somewhat limiting.

Selection of trees and shrubs for fruiting characteristics should be done carefully in order to select the best kinds and to avoid undesirable features that many have.

Some kinds of trees and shrubs have excellent fall color while others have little or no interest at this season. Colors are mostly yellow, orange, or red but a few kinds are reddish-purple. Evergreen trees and shrubs with green foliage can be used effectively to accent the fall coloration of other plants, and in addition will continue to be effective during winter.

Only a few kinds of trees and shrubs have showy flowers, fruits, and fall color as part of the same plant. Because of this it is usually necessary to select a combination of several kinds of trees and shrubs in order to have all seasonal interests represented in a landscape planting. However, this does provide an opportunity to introduce a wide variety of plants into the garden or to develop a garden emphasizing a specific seasonal interest (fruit garden, flower garden, spring garden, fall garden, etc.).

In the areas where deciduous plants predominate, selection considerations should include winter features as well. Characteristics such as bark color and character, branching habit and texture, and twig color can be significant contributors to the winter garden scene. A number of trees and shrubs have excellent winter characteristics and they should be used where appropriate.

Besides determining the many desirable characters that trees and shrubs have, you should find out any undesirable features that may limit their effectiveness in a landscape planting.

Nearly all plants have problems that may limit their usefulness. Some kinds are particularly susceptible to damage by insects and diseases. While the problem can often be controlled, certain plants are best avoided due to their very common pest problems.

Other plants have weak wood, have undesirable fruits, develop exceptional amounts of litter, or produce hazards (such as thorns) that limit their usefulness.

Other kinds are hard to transplant or...
require special soil conditions if they are to grow properly.

Information on potential plant problems is often more difficult to obtain yet it should be a major factor in plant selection.

When all the information is assembled for each plant, including both the good and bad features, then the best selections to meet each kind of planting situation can be made.

**Planting Maintenance**

Once final selections have been made, the ultimate success of the new plantings will be determined by proper planting and maintenance techniques. Some things to consider are:

- Soil should be well prepared with particular attention towards adequate soil drainage.
- Planting holes should be of sufficient size to accommodate the root system without crowding. The plants should be set at the proper level and the soil firmed in place.
- Watering should be thorough and continued periodically until the root system is well established. Trees may benefit from wrapping and staking and the removal of a portion of the lateral branches (not the leader).
- Once plants are established, maintenance practices may include periodic fertilization and watering. If the plants are not being used as hedge material, pruning should be restricted to removal of interfering or crossing branches, dead or dying branches, or the occasional branch that is not in keeping with normal growth characteristics of the plant. Excessive pruning is neither necessary nor desirable.

Many kinds of trees and shrubs are available for landscape planting. Selection based on as much information as possible will lead to wise decisions and a more effective and satisfying garden scene. The choices are up to you!

The Cooperative Extension Offices throughout the country usually have circulars, leaflets, or information bulletins on the various aspects of plant selection and maintenance. Many are free or available at a nominal charge. Consult your local Cooperative Extension Office for what is available in your area.

---

**FOR FURTHER READING:**


---

**A Rose Is a Rose, But Roses Come by the Thousands**

*O*ften said to be the most popular flower in America today, the rose may be readily grown in the home garden. There is relatively little investment, and the time and materials used give great return in prolific and beautiful blooms over a long season. Proper location and care are the main factors for success.

Roses are representative of the earliest flowers native to our country. In Oregon and Colorado fossil remains of rose blooms date back at least 35 million years.