



The Plant Professionals

## CHOOSING A TREE

Trees do so many great things for us. They cool our neighborhoods and our homes (and even save us money on our electric bills). They slow our sometimes horrible South Texas winds down to a comfortable breeze, they filter dirt and other pollutants out of the air, and on a more global level, they pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, thereby fighting the “Greenhouse Effect”.

So what kind of trees to plant? I’d like to recommend to you a variety of trees that are fast growing, long lived, flowers continuously, never drops any leaves or blooms, is evergreen, and has nice fall color. I’d like to, but I can’t, because this tree doesn’t exist. In reality, you have to make some compromises. All trees have their strengths and weaknesses, so let’s talk about them.

**Anaqua** – native, evergreen, attractive white bloom and yellow berry, good bird tree; relatively slow growing. Don’t plant over paving.

**Arizona Ash (Fan- Tex)** – fast growth, large size (though much variation in size occurs in seed grown trees); webworms can make a mess, relatively short use full life (25-30 years).

**Cedar Elm** – native, yellow fall color, narrow crown fits in narrow spaces such as curb strips or side yards; “offbeat” branching pattern is attractive to some but not to all.

**Crape Myrtle (Basham Party Pink & Natchez)**- moderate growing, 20’- 30’ tall & 10’- 15’ wide, blooms in summer, drought tolerant, resistant to mildew and leaf spot, attracts bees, birds and butterflies, plant in full sun.

**Live Oak** – native, evergreen, strong wood, moderately fast growing with good care (but often slow to start). Few serious insect or disease problems at this point except “asp” caterpillar, but as Live Oak has recently become so widely planted, new problems are likely to develop; older trees have dense shade and roots that- limit nearby plantings, and people often underestimate their ultimate size; high winds cause stunting.

**Mesquite** – native, best adapted to poor soils, high winds and tolerates poor maintenance. Light shade of mature trees allows lawn or ornamentals beneath, “artistic” twisting trunks and branches. Requires yearly pruning to maintain attractive shape and allow pedestrian or vehicle traffic beneath, can drop sap on cars or paving. Not tall enough to throw a long shadow over a house. Non-native thornless mesquite does not anchor well in our soil and is subject to freezing in severe winters.

**Montezuma Cypress** – looks like our Hill Country bald cypress, but faster growing, Tolerates wet areas; does not like severe wind.

**Soapberry** – native, attractive creamy white blooms in spring and yellow foliage in fall. Tall and relatively narrow outline, moderate growth rate and lifespan.

**Sycamore** – fast growing, attractive bark and new foliage, short life, ugly old foliage, poor wind tolerance.

Many other tree varieties will grow in South Texas, but may have a more limited appeal, or require a more specific environment, or may have a lower success ratio. Please ask one of our Certified Nursery Professionals if you have questions.