

Trees and Shrubs Native to Northeastern Illinois



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Why plant native? As a key component of this region's unique landscape, native trees and shrubs are adapted to growing conditions in Northeastern Illinois and provide a wise investment compared to many high-maintenance cultivars. Our remaining songbirds, pollinators, and other beneficial indigenous wildlife cannot survive solely on the European and Asian trees and shrubs that currently cover so much of our suburban and urban landscape. They need trees and shrubs native to northeastern Illinois because of intricate life cycle requirements, many of which are subtly timed to synchronize with other species. Every property presents an opportunity to support this area's exceptional network of ecosystems while also meeting desired landscaping aesthetics.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Soil Moisture Preference	Grows Best In	Mature Height (ft)	Mature Width (ft)	Shape	Selection Notes	Suitable for street tree, salt tolerant	Important species for healthy oak ecosystems
sugar maple	<u>Acer saccharum</u>	medium	shade to sun	60-75	40-55	canopy tree			
river birch, f	<u>Betula nigra</u>	wet-medium	full sun	30-40	20-30	canopy tree	Does not tolerate drought.		
bitternut hickory	<u>Carya cordiformis</u>	medium-wet	part sun	50-75	30-40	canopy tree		yes	yes
pignut hickory	<u>Carya glabra</u>	medium-dry	part sun	50-75	30-40	canopy tree		yes	yes
shagbark hickory	<u>Carya ovata</u>	medium-dry	part sun	60-80	40-50	canopy tree		yes	yes
mockernut hickory	<u>Carya tomentosa</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun	50-75	30-40	canopy tree		yes	yes
hackberry	<u>Celtis occidentalis</u>	medium-wet	full sun	40-60	40-50	canopy tree		yes	
American beech	<u>Fagus grandifolia</u>	medium	shade	50-60	40-50	canopy tree			

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Kentucky coffee tree	<u>Gymnocladus dioicus</u>	dry/well-drained	full sun	50-60	40-50	canopy tree		yes	
butternut	<u>Juglans cinerea</u>	medium-dry	full sun	40-50	30-50	canopy tree			yes
black walnut	<u>Juglans nigra</u>	medium-dry	full sun	50-60	30-50	canopy tree		yes	yes
tamarack, f	<u>Larix laricina</u>	wet-medium	full sun	30-50	20-30	canopy tree	Needles drop off in the fall.		
black tupelo or sour gum	<u>Nyssa sylvatica</u>	medium-wet	full sun	30-50	25-30	canopy tree	Protect from west winds.	yes	yes
sycamore, f	<u>Platanus occidentalis</u>	wet-medium	part sun	75-100	50-75	canopy tree		yes	
eastern cottonwood	<u>Populus deltoides</u>	wet - dry	sun	75-120	75-100	canopy tree	Place away from buildings.	yes	
white oak	<u>Quercus alba</u>	medium-dry	part sun to sun	50-80	50-80	canopy tree			yes
swamp white oak, f	<u>Quercus bicolor</u>	wet-medium	part sun to sun	50-60	50-60	canopy tree		yes	yes
scarlet oak or hill's oak	<u>Quercus coccinea (or Q. ellipsoidalis)</u>	dry/well-drained	full sun	40-75	40-75	canopy tree		yes	yes
shingle oak	<u>Quercus imbricaria</u>	medium	full sun	40-50	40-50	canopy tree			yes
bur oak	<u>Quercus macrocarpa</u>	medium-wet	full sun	50-80	50-80	canopy tree		yes	yes
chinquapin oak	<u>Quercus muehlenbergii</u>	medium-dry	full sun	50-80	50-70	canopy tree	Tolerates high soil pH.	yes	yes
pin oak, f	<u>Quercus palustris</u>	wet-medium	full sun	60-70	40-50	canopy tree	Prefers acidic soil.		yes
northern red oak	<u>Quercus rubra</u>	medium-dry	part sun	60-80	60-75	canopy tree			yes
black oak	<u>Quercus velutina</u>	dry/well-drained	full sun	50-75	50-60	canopy tree	Requires sandy or gravelly soil.	yes	yes
basswood or linden	<u>Tilia americana</u>	medium	full to part sun	60-80	30-40	canopy tree		yes	
Ohio buckeye	<u>Aesculus glabra</u>	medium-wet	shade to sun	20-40	20-30	understory tree			yes
serviceberry or Juneberry	<u>Amelanchier arborea</u>	medium-dry	part sun	15-25	10-15	understory tree			yes
inland shadblow	<u>Amelanchier interior</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun	15-20	10-15	understory tree			yes

Alleghany serviceberry	<u>Amelanchier laevis</u>	dry/well-drained	shade to sun	20-25	15-18	understory tree		yes	yes
pawpaw	<u>Asimina triloba</u>	medium-wet	part shade	15-20	15-20	understory tree	Protect from west winds.		
blue beech or musclewood, s	<u>Carpinus caroliniana</u>	medium-wet	part sun	25-35	20-30	understory tree			yes
eastern redbud, s	<u>Cercis canadensis</u>	medium	part sun	15-20	20-25	understory tree			yes
pagoda dogwood	<u>Cornus alternifolia</u>	medium	shade to part sun	15-25	15-25	understory tree			
hazelnut or filbert, s	<u>Corylus americana</u>	medium-wet	part sun	06-08	06-08	understory tree		yes	yes
scarlet hawthorn	<u>Crataegus coccinea</u>	dry-medium	full sun	20-30	20-35	understory tree	Caution: large thorns.		yes
cockspur hawthorn	<u>Crataegus crus-galli</u>	medium	full sun	20-30	20-35	understory tree	Caution: large thorns.		yes
downy hawthorn	<u>Crataegus mollis</u>	medium	full sun	20-30	20-35	understory tree	Caution: large thorns.		
wahoo, f	<u>Euonymus atropurpureus</u>	medium-wet	shade to sun	08-12	08-10	understory tree			
prairie crab, t	<u>Malus ioensis</u>	dry-medium	full sun	15-20	10-15	understory tree		yes	
hop hornbeam or ironwood, s	<u>Ostrya virginiana</u>	medium-dry	shade to sun	25-40	15-20	understory tree		yes	yes
chokecherry	<u>Prunus virginiana</u>	medium-wet	full sun	15-20	10-15	understory tree		yes	yes
pussy willow, f	<u>Salix discolor</u>	wet-medium	part shade to sun	25-35	12-15	understory tree			
sassafras	<u>Sassafras albidum</u>	medium-dry	shade to sun	20-30	25-40	understory tree	Prefers acidic soil.		
witch hazel, s	<u>Hamamelis virginiana</u>	medium	part sun to sun	15-20	15-20	understory tree or shrub			yes
wafer ash, s	<u>Ptelea trifoliata</u>	medium-dry	shade to sun	15-20	10-15	understory tree or shrub		yes	yes
blackhaw viburnum, s	<u>Viburnum prunifolium</u>	medium	shade to sun	12-15	08-12	understory tree or shrub		yes	yes
lead plant	<u>Amorpha canescens</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun to sun	02-04	02-04	shrub			
false indigo bush, f, t	<u>Amorpha fruticosa</u>	wet-medium	full sun	06-15	05-15	shrub		yes	

black chokeberry, s	<u>Aronia melanocarpa</u>	wet-medium	part sun	10-20	06-10	shrub			yes
New Jersey tea	<u>Ceanothus americanus</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun to sun	03-04	03-05	shrub			
buttonbush, f	<u>Cephalanthus occidentalis</u>	wet	part sun to sun	06-12	12-18	shrub		yes	
blue-fruited dogwood,f	<u>Cornus obliqua</u>	wet-medium	part sun	06-10	06-10	shrub		yes	
red osier dogwood, f	<u>Cornus stolonifera</u>	wet-medium	full sun	07-09	07-10	shrub			
dwarf honeysuckle	<u>Diervilla lonicera</u>	medium-dry	full sun to shade	02-03	03-05	shrub			yes
wild hydrangea	<u>Hydrangea arborescens</u>	medium-wet	shade	03-05	05-08	shrub			
Kalm's St. John's wort, f	<u>Hypericum kalmianum</u>	wet-medium	full sun	02-05	03-06	shrub			
shrubby St. John's wort, f	<u>Hypericum prolificum</u>	medium-dry	part sun	02-05	03-06	shrub		yes	
winterberry, f	<u>Ilex verticillata</u>	wet-medium	shade to sun	06-10	06-10	shrub			
spicebush, s	<u>Lindera benzoin</u>	wet-medium	shade to sun	10-20	06-12	shrub			yes
ninebark, s	<u>Physocarpus opulifolius</u>	wet-medium	shade to sun	05-10	06-10	shrub		yes	
shrubby cinquefoil, f	<u>Potentilla fruticosa</u>	wet-medium	full sun	01-04	02-04	shrub			
American plum, t	<u>Prunus americana</u>	dry/well-drained	full sun	15-25	15-20	shrub			
fragrant sumac, s, t	<u>Rhus aromatica</u>	dry/well-drained	part shade to sun	05-10	06-10	shrub		yes	yes
shining sumac	<u>Rhus copallina</u>	dry/well-drained	sun	06-10	03-06	shrub	Prefers sandy soil.		
smooth sumac, t	<u>Rhus glabra</u>	dry/well-drained	full sun	10-15	10-25	shrub	Good for berms.	yes	
wild black currant, f, t	<u>Ribes americanum</u>	wet-medium	shade to sun	03-06	03-06	shrub		yes	yes
prickly wild gooseberry, t	<u>Ribes cynosbati</u>	medium-dry	part shade to sun	03-06	03-06	shrub			
wild gooseberry, t	<u>Ribes missouriense</u>	medium-dry	part shade to sun	03-06	03-06	shrub		yes	yes

early wild rose, t	<u>Rosa blanda</u>	medium-dry	full sun	04-08	04-08	shrub		yes	
pasture rose, t	<u>Rosa carolina</u>	medium-dry	full sun	03-06	06-10	shrub			
scarlet rose, t	<u>Rosa palustris</u>	wet	part sun	03-06	03-06	shrub		yes	
Illinois rose, t	<u>Rosa setigera</u>	medium-dry	full sun	03-04	10-15	shrub		yes	
purple flowering raspberry	<u>Rubus odoratus</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun	03-06	03-06	shrub		yes	
prairie willow, f, t	<u>Salix humilis</u>	medium-dry	part sun	06-12	06-12	shrub			
elderberry, f, s, t	<u>Sambucus canadensis</u>	medium	shade to sun	06-12	06-12	shrub		yes	
meadowsweet, f	<u>Spiraea alba</u>	wet-medium	part sun to sun	02-03	02-03	shrub		yes	
steepleshub, f	<u>Spiraea tomentosa</u>	medium-wet	full sun	03-06	03-06	shrub			
snowberry	<u>Symphoricarpos albus</u>	medium-dry	shade to sun	03-06	03-06	shrub			yes
early low blueberry, f	<u>Vaccinium angustifolium</u>	medium-dry	full sun	02-03	02-03	shrub			
maple leaf viburnum, s	<u>Viburnum acerifolium</u>	dry/well-drained	shade to sun	04-06	04-06	shrub			yes
nannyberry, s	<u>Viburnum lentago</u>	medium-wet	part sun	15-20	10-15	shrub		yes	yes
downy arrowwood, s	<u>Viburnum rafinesquianum</u>	dry/well-drained	part sun	12-15	08-12	shrub			yes
American cranberry, f	<u>Viburnum trilobum</u>	wet-medium	full to part sun	08-12	08-12	shrub			
prickly ash, t	<u>Zanthoxylum americanum</u>	dry/well-drained	full to part sun	08-12	05-10	Shrub	Not a true ash so not susceptible to emerald ash borer.		yes

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Tips for a successful planting Choose a tree by understanding its mature size and preferences for your setting, and plan on providing supplemental water for the first few growing seasons. Select trees that are small and young. They'll be less expensive, require a smaller hole, adapt faster to your site, and need less watering while getting established. They'll quickly catch up to larger-sized specimens. Consider carefully the soil moisture and sunlight in your planting area and choose a species well-suited to it. Don't be enticed by a good-looking tree that is poorly suited to your site. Keep large species away from buildings and power lines. Plant, water, and mulch properly.

Why are scientific names important? When looking to buy native plants, use the scientific name to ensure you are buying a true native. Avoid plants whose scientific names include words in single quotes such as *Acer saccharum* 'Legacy' or *Viburnum carlesii* 'Compactum.' Cultivars, ornamentals, and nativars can perform beautifully in a landscape but be aware that they generally may lack features of true natives that are needed by songbirds, butterflies, and others who share ancient relationships with them that impact species survival. Slight alterations to nectar, blooms, fruits, thorns, leaves, and roots may interfere with critical needs.

This list is limited to those native species that might generally be available from nurseries that grow trees and shrubs native to northeastern Illinois. It was developed with technical support from The Morton Arboretum and the Chicago Region Trees Initiative. For a more detailed list, see "Flora of the Chicago Region" by Wilhelm and Rericha.

Updated in 2022 to incorporate findings from The Chicago Wilderness Region Urban Forest Vulnerability Assessment and Synthesis, Brandt et al. 2017.