

Brighton & Hove City Council
Arboricultural Information Note No. 2

Trees in Small Gardens



Acer Griseum Paperbark Maple

Not all gardens have room for large trees - some owners might wish to enjoy the shade, bird life, berries or other benefits provided by trees but, because of their experiences with problem trees, feel that by planting replacements in their small gardens previous problems may be continued as the tree matures.

Obviously, the smallest of gardens would not be the most suitable of places to attempt tree planting, although even these could, given sufficient light, support dwarf root stocked fruit trees either planted directly into the ground or in tubs. Also true dwarf or very slow-growing conifers could also be considered.

The following selection would, with care of choice and siting, allow at least one tree or possibly more to be planted in an average town garden of around 10 x 7 metres.

Acer capillipes Snakebark Maple

A small tree with striated snake-like bark and bright green three-lobed leaves. The young growth is coral-red and in autumn the leaves turn to orange and red before falling.

Acer grosseri Snakebark Maple

Perhaps the most attractive of the 'snakebarks'. A small tree with green and white striated bark and fine autumn colour.

Acer griseum Paperbark Maple

One of the most beautiful of small trees, having foliage compiled of three separate leaflets often superbly coloured red and scarlet in autumn. The older bark on the main stem and branches flakes back to show cinnamon-coloured under-bark.

Acer negundo 'Flamingo' Box Elder

A popular maple, making a large shrub or small tree. Young leaves have a broad soft pink margin changing to white.

Acer pseudoplatanus 'Brilliantissimum' *Sycamore*

A distinct small and slow-growing Sycamore whose leaves in spring are a shrimp-pink, later changing to pale yellow-green and finally green.

Aesculus x neglecta 'Erythroblastos' Chestnut family

A spectacular, very slow-growing form with young leaves of bright shrimp-pink changing to yellow-green as the season progresses.

Aesculus parviflora Chestnut family

This Chestnut never reaches more than 3m in height. The flowers are white with red anthers while the leaves are bronzed when young and yellow in autumn before leaf-fall.

Aesculus pavia Red Buckeye

A lovely small tree whose leaves comprise five glossy green leaflets. The scarlet flowers are borne from June in 15cm panicles.

Arbutus unedo Killarney Strawberry Tree

A small tree with deep brown shredding bark with flowers and fruits produced together in autumn. Unusually, this is an ericaceous plant (prefers acid soil) which tolerates our local alkaline soils extremely well.

Betula pendula ‘Youngii’ Young’s Weeping Birch

A form of native Silver Birch, with silvery-white bark and diamond-shaped leaves ultimately making a dome or mushroom-headed small weeping tree. Yellow catkins are produced in spring.

Cercis siliquastrum Judas Tree

Legend has it that this was the tree on which Judas hanged himself. That said, the tree is superb with a small low-forked canopy bearing rosy-lilac coloured flowers in spring before the leaves appear, and lilac seed pods in July.

Crataegus species Hawthorn

The Thorns are among the hardiest and most adaptable of trees, surviving well even in industrial and coastal areas. Most are small trees with red, red-pink or white flowers and red berries. There is a wide choice of species with the following being worthy of consideration:

Crataegus monogyna ‘Stricta’ branches erect; a small tough tree for exposed sites.

Crataegus laevigata ‘Paul’s Scarlet’ with double scarlet flowers.

Crataegus prunifolia a small compact, broad-headed tree with polished oval, glossy green leaves, large crimson fruits and rich autumn colour.

Laburnum x vossii Golden Rain Tree

A very free-flowering hybrid Laburnum with upright-growing branches clothed in long racemes of buttercup yellow flowers in June. The pea-like pods which follow contain **poisonous seeds**.

Malus floribunda Japanese Crab Apple

A small, flowering tree with long arching branches and crimson buds opening to white or pink-flushed flowers; the fruits are red or yellow.

Prunus subhirtella ‘Autumnalis Rosea’ Autumn Cherry

A small tree producing blush-pink semi-double flowers from November to March. These last well as cut sprays for indoor decoration.

Prunus 'Hillings Weeping' Hillings Weeping Cherry

A small tree with long slender, almost perpendicularly, weeping branches.

Salix matsudana 'Tortuosa' Twisted Pekin Willow

A curious, very slow-growing Willow with twisted branches, pale green leaves and catkins in spring.

Sorbus aria Whitebeam

A small to sometimes medium native tree with a compact round head of branches. Leaves greyish-white at first and later bright green above and white beneath and turning to gold and russet in autumn which contrasts with the deep crimson fruits.

Sorbus vilmorinii

A beautiful small tree of spreading habit with drooping clusters of fruit, rose-red at first, gradually changing to a pink-flushed white marble effect.

CONIFERS

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Fletcheri'

A commonly planted cultivar forming a dense compact column up to 5m; normally a broad, columnar bush with several main stems. A slow-growing tree, greyish-green in colour, becoming bronzed in winter.

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Grayswood Feather'

A small tree of slender columnar habit with upright sprays of dark green foliage.

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Grayswood Gold'

As 'Grayswood Feather' but with golden yellow foliage.

Cryptomeria japonica 'Elegans' Japanese Cedar

A beautiful form of tall bushy habit, eventually making a small tree. The soft, feathery juvenile foliage is retained throughout life and becomes an attractive red-bronze during autumn and winter.

Juniperus communis 'Hibernica' Irish Juniper

A dense-growing, compact form of slender, columnar habit attaining 3m or occasionally 5m in height. Leaves are densely arranged. A very popular conifer, excellent for use in formal landscapes and gardens.

Thuja occidentalis 'Rheingold' American Arbor-vitae

A slow-growing bush of ovoid or conical habit, eventually making a large shrub. The foliage is of old gold, shaded amber. Excellent against dark walls or green conifers.