Lafayette Consolidated Government

Development and Planning Department

Community Planting Guide

Choosing an Appropriate Tree, Local Resources Available, Species Selection List, and More

This guide provides you with resources for planting trees in the city. Using the right tree in the right place, and maintaining it correctly will provide healthy, beautiful trees whose benefits can be enjoyed by the community for many years.

The Community Planting Policy for Lafayette, LA was created by Lafayette Consolidated Government with input from the LCG Development and Planning Department, LCG Public Works Department (including Traffic and Transportation Division), and the Lafayette Utilities System.

Recognition is given to the New Orleans Tree Planting Permit Process and the Lafayette Unified Development Code for policy guidance. Tree selection recognition goes to the LSU Ag Center's Native Tree Guide and Dana Brown and Associate's Tree Selection Guide created for the 2015 Lafayette Neighborhood Toolkit.

Community Planting Policy piloted and enacted in September/October of 2018.

Version: January 2019

Choosing an Appropriate Tree

Every tree species has its good points as well as its negatives. Learn all that you can, make an informed decision, and choose the most appropriate tree for your location.

What is the width of the area?

If the width of the planting strip is less than 5 feet, only a small size tree is allowed. See the chart below to choose an appropriately sized tree.

Are there overhead or underground utility lines?

Overhead utility lines limit the size of the tree that can be planted beneath them. A tree that grows into the wires could cause disruption of utility service to your neighborhood during a storm. Often, a utility company will have to prune a tree to allow for the unimpeded passage of the wires through the canopy of the tree. It is best to avoid these problems by selecting and planting the correct tree for your location.

Do you prefer an evergreen or deciduous tree?

Deciduous trees often have the benefit of autumn color before the leaves drop each fall. They are also more energy efficient as they provide shade in the summer but do not block the winter sun. Evergreen trees still drop leaves, either periodically through the year (like the southern magnolia) or as the new leaves are emerging in the spring (like the live oak). But they are never completely bare.

Should you choose a flowering tree, a fruiting tree or a shade tree?

After taking into account the space limitations of your planting location, the answer depends a lot on personal preference and your aggravation threshold. A crepe myrtle provides colorful blooms all summer, but some people consider the flowers a maintenance nuisance as they drop onto cars and sidewalks. Berries attract birds, but also bird poop. The shade provided from a live oak tree can be very welcome in our hot summers, but the live oak often demands more room than is available, buckling adjacent sidewalks and encroaching onto roofs of neighboring structures. Take the specific features of tree species into account and how they will affect the maintenance of public spaces.

How do you pick the spot to plant the tree?

There are standards for minimum distances between where you plant the tree and existing features along your street. Plant no closer than 25 feet from a corner intersection or 5 feet from a driveway, so that the tree won't block visibility and become a traffic hazard. Allow at least 20 feet between a tree and a light pole. You do not want the tree to block the light and create dark spots at night. Stay at least 10 feet away from a fire hydrant. Keep an area at least 4 feet in width by 7 feet in height clear for pedestrians along the sidewalk. A tree should never be allowed to impede pedestrian movement.

Local Resources

Species Guides

See these local resources on tree species information:

Native Tree Guide: The Selection, Planting, and Care of Urban Trees
LSU Ag Center—www.agcenter.com

Lafayette Recommended Tree Species Guide
PlanLafayette Neighborhood Project Toolkit (pg 90) - www.lafayettela.gov

UDC: Landscaping, Buffers & Screening (Sec 89-36)
Lafayette Code of Ordinances—Unified Development Code (Sec 89-36)

Local Resource Groups

A number of community groups are available as a free resource for your horticulture questions. Reach out to members of the following groups for tips and suggestions regarding your planting projects:

TreesAcadiana
Scenic Lafayette
Lafayette Master Gardeners
Lafayette Master Naturalists
Acadiana Native Plant Project
Bayou Vermilion District
UL Horticulture Center
Chasant Brothers
LSU Ag Center Parish Office

Tree Care List

Certain useful materials are available for purchase and in some cases, available for donation for community planting projects. Consider using these tools and tricks to increase your chances of growing a healthy tree in its formative years:

Mulch (retains moisture within soil and provides buffer from cold/heat)
Watering Bags(slow-release water bags for less water maintenance)
Trunk Protector Tube (protects tree trunk from lawn mowers and weed eaters)
Support Stakes (helps stabilize root system for straight-growing trees)
Root Barrier Kit (prevents tree root damage to infrastructure)
Fertilizer (provides nutrients to growing trees)

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Suggested Tree Species for Urban Plantings

TREES FOR PLANTING STRIPS OF 8 FT. TO 15 FT. WIDTH AND UNDER LOW UTILITY LINES

Native Tree Species

Sweetbay Magnolia (Magnolia virginiana)	Dahoon Holly (Ilex cassine)	\Southern Wax Myrtle (Myrica cerifera)
Fringe Tree (Chionanthus retusus)	Silverbell (Cornus -orida)	Possum-Haw Holly (Ilex decidua)
River Birch (Betula nigra)	American Holly (Ilex opaca)	Little Gem Magnolia (Magnolia gradi-ora 'little gem')
Ironwood aka American Hornbeam (Carpinus caroliniana)	Yaupon Holly (Ilex vomitoria)	American Persimmon (Dyospiros virginiana)
American Snowbell (Styrax americanus)	Western Mayhaw (Crataegus opaca)	

Non-Native Species

Lacebark Elm aka Drake Elm (Ulmus parvifolia 'drake')	Chinese Pistache (Pistacia chinensis)	Foster's Holly (Ilex x attenuata 'Fosteri')
Nellie Stevens Holly (Ilex 'Nellie Stevens')	Crape Myrtle (Lagerstroemia indica)	Sweet Olive (Osmanthus fragrans)
Japanese Maple (Acer palmatum)	Flowering Cherry (Prunus campanulata)	

Determining Size

Small Trees: <25' height at maturity
(<25' diameter crown spread)

Medium Trees: 25-50' height at maturity
(25-35' diameter crown spread)

Large Trees: >50' height at maturity
(>35' diameter crown spread)

The crown of a tree consists of the mass of foliage and branches growing outward from the trunk of the tree. The **crown spread** is the average horizontal width of the crown, taken from dripline to dripline.

NOTE: This list is subject to change as we develop better tree planning processes as a municipality.

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Suggested Tree Species for Urban Plantings

TREES FOR PLANTING STRIPS OVER 15 FT. WIDTH AND WHERE NO UTILITY LINES EXIST

Native Tree Species

Green Ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica)	Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum)	American Elm (Ulmus Americana)
Tulip Tree (Liriodendron tulipifera)	Nuttall Oak (Quercus nutallii)	Shumard Oak (Quercus shumardii)
Cherrybark Oak (Quercus falcata 'pagodifolia')	Swamp Chestnut Oak aka Cow Oak (Quercus michauxii)	Overcup Oak (Quercus lyrata)
Willow Oak (Quercus phellos)	Sawtooth Oak (Quercus acutissima)	Eastern Red Cedar (Jniperus virginiana 'canartii')
Slash Pine (Pinus elliottii)	White Oak (Quercus alba)	Cedar Elm aka Winged Elm (Ulmus crassifolia)
Southern Red Oak (Quercus falcata)	Black Gum (Nyssa sylvatica)	White Ash (Fraxinus Americana)
Black Cherry (Prunus serotine)	Swamp Red Maple (Acer rubrum var. 'drummondii')	Southern Magnolia (Magnolia grandi-ora)
Tupelo Gum (Nyssa aquatic)		American Sweet Gum (Liquidambar styraci-ua)

Non-Native Species

Chinese Chestnut (Castanea mollissima)	Dawn Redwood (Metasequoia)	American Linden (Tilia Americana)
	Western Soapberry (Sapindus saponaria)	

TREES FOR PLANTING STRIPS OVER 30 FT. WIDTH AND WHERE NO UTILITY LINES EXIST

Native Tree Species

	Southern Live Oak* (Quercus virginiana)	

*Live Oaks should not be considered an ideal street tree. While they are beautiful and should be preserved, they require much more space than is available along a roadway.

Determine the Value of Your Tree!

You'll need to know the type of tree, its trunk diameter, and general age and distance of any nearby buildings. https://mytree.itreetools.org/

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