

# Recommended Small or Understory Trees for University Park

Note: These trees do not qualify for the Shade Tree Reimbursement Program



University Park,  
Maryland  
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## Table of Contents

	Page number
American Hornbeam ( <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> )	1
American Wild Plum ( <i>Prunus americana</i> )	2
Chinese Fringe Tree ( <i>Chionanthus retusus</i> )	3
Crab Apples ( <i>Malus</i> sp.)	4
Dogwood ( <i>Cornus kousa</i> )	5
Eastern Redbud ( <i>Cersis canadensis</i> )	6
Fig ( <i>Ficus carica</i> )	7
Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus</i> sp.)	8
Pawpaw ( <i>Asimina triloba</i> )	9
Persimmon ( <i>Diospyros ebenaceae</i> )	10
Saucer Magnolia ( <i>Magnolia X Soulangeana</i> )	11
Serviceberry ( <i>Amelanchier</i> sp.)	12
Silver Bell ( <i>Halesia carolina</i> )	13
Snowbell ( <i>Styrax</i> sp.)	14
Sourwood ( <i>Oxydendrum arboreum</i> )	15
Acknowledgements	16

# American Hornbeam

## *Carpinus caroliniana*



**HEIGHT:** 13'-40'

**SPREAD:** 35'-50'

**GROWTH RATE:** medium to slow growing

**FALL COLORS:** orange and red

**FLOWERS:** April-May, red or reddish green catkins, about one and a half inches long.

**LEAF:** Alternate, 3–12 cm long, with prominent veins giving a distinctive corrugated texture, and a serrated margin.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Great small to medium landscape tree for a home garden. Gives good shade when mature and has interesting fruit.

Also known as blue beech, musclewood and ironwood, common names refer to tree trunk, which is blue gray and smooth, with undulations that look like flexing muscles.

# American Wild Plum

*Prunus americana*



**HEIGHT:** 20'-35'

**SPREAD:** 20'-35'

**FALL COLORS:** Pale yellow

**FLOWERS:** Month of May, white, flowers appear before leaves.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, simple alternate leaf with oval shape.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Hundreds of varieties of fruiting and ornamental (non-fruiting) varieties so choose wisely for your particular landscape use.

Plum trees have a rounded vase shape with a dense canopy. Tree produces edible fruit typically used for making pies and jellies.

# Chinese fringe tree

*Chionanthus retusus*



**HEIGHT:** 15'-20'

**SPREAD:** 20'-25'

**GROWTH RATE:** slow

**FALL COLORS:** yellow

**FLOWERS:** May –June, pure white fragrant, that hang down in clusters covering the tree.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, leaves are broad, simple ovate to oblong-elliptic, hairy.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Beautiful flowering tree that is best used as an airy shrub.

Prefers rich, moist, well drained soil slightly acidic. Good as a specimen plant. Bark is an attractive gray.

## Crab Apples *Malus sp.*



**HEIGHT:** 8'-30'

**SPREAD:** varies, generally 20'-30'

**FALL COLORS:** variable depending on variety, yellow.

**FLOWERS:** white to pink

**LEAF:** The apple tree leaves are deciduous, alternately, simple ovals 5-12 cm long and 3-6 cm wide. The leaf has an acute tip, serrated edges and a slightly fuzzy underside. Deep green to purple in color

**NATIVE:** Apples are generally believed to be native to Turkey, but there are native varieties throughout Asia and Europe.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Beautiful small landscape tree in the urban landscape. Weeping varieties are available. Valued for their showy bloom and fruit that can be used in cooking. Over 600 are cultivated; choose a disease resistant variety as they are susceptible to many problems.

# Dogwood

## *Cornus florida*



**HEIGHT:** 20'-40'

**SPREAD:** 20'-40'

**FALL COLORS:** Scarlet red

**FLOWERS:** April –May, large star shaped white, can also find pink and red.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, oppositely attached, simple oval shaped leaves 2-6 inches long and about 2 ½ inches wide.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Has been called the most beautiful native tree of North America. Fall migrating birds eat berries. Unfortunately an anthracnose fungus has been killing these trees. Best in moist, well drained soil. Non native *Cornus kousa* is also widely planted, and along with some of the hybrids provides more disease resistance.

# Eastern redbud,

*Cercis canadensis*



**HEIGHT:** 20'-30'

**SPREAD:** 20'-35'

**FALL COLORS:** Golden yellow

**FLOWERS:** April- May, very showy, pea like, pink to lavender, ½ inch long, emerge prior to leaves.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, alternate, simple, cordate, 3 to 5 inches long and wide, with an entire margin, thin and papery.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Beautiful tree that can be used as a specimen tree or as an understory planting.

This adaptable tree is prized for showy flower buds, flowers, vibrant fall color and rounded heart shaped leaves.

# Fig, edible

*Ficus carica*



**HEIGHT:** Up to 20' if in a protected location

**SPREAD:** To 20'

**FALL COLORS:** Orange, red, to yellow.

**FLOWERS:** Invisible, inside fruit, fig wasp enters fruit to pollinate it. All flowers are female so pollination is not essential.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, large rough textured, bright green, three to seven-lobed.

**NATIVE:** Presumed to originate from Western Asia and spread to the Mediterranean by humans.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** The trees provide a tropical look in the northern landscape.

The tree has been cultivated as far back as 5,000 B.C for its edible fruit. The roots are hardy to 0 degrees but will benefit from a sheltered location. Many cultivars to choose from, with the best being: Chicago Hardy, Brown Turkey, Black Mission and Celeste.

## Hawthorn *Crataegus* sp.



**HEIGHT:** 20'-35'

**SPREAD:** 20'-35'

**FALL COLORS:** Orange to red, purple to scarlet.

**FLOWERS:** May- June, white

**LEAF:** **Deciduous**, serrate margins and are somewhat variable in shape.

**NATIVE:** At least to Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia depending on the species.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Has small attractive small apple-like red fruit.

Two recommended species are cockspur hawthorn, *Crataegus crus-galli* and southern thorn or green hawthorn, *Crataegus viridis*. Has cultural significance for many ancient cultures.

# Pawpaw

## *Asimina triloba*



**HEIGHT:** 20'-35'

**SPREAD:** 20'-35'

**FALL COLORS:** Yellow/copper-red

**FLOWERS:** March to May, dark lavender to maroon, upside-down flowers up to 2 inches across. Each flower has multiple ovaries and can produce multiple fruit from a single flower. The pawpaw is not self-fertile and requires cross pollination.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, dark green, oblong, drooping leaf that can grow up to 12 inches long and is widest just behind the tip. The leaves do not do well in strong windy areas and require some protection.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Grown for the delicious fruit which is in the same family as the cherimoya.

Buy grafted varieties as seedlings are highly variable.

# Persimmon

*Diospyros ebenaceae*



**HEIGHT:** Up to 25'

**SPREAD:** Up to 25'

**FALL COLORS:** Yellow to purple.

**FLOWERS:** March- June, greenish yellow to cream

**LEAF:** Deciduous, glossy, alternate, simple, up to 7 inches long and 4 inches wide.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Persimmons can be either a multi-stem or single-stem trunk, with drooping leaves and branches that give it a tropical appearance. It can also form thickets from root suckers.

Fruit is very astringent until ripe. Fruit ripens in early fall, both male and female trees are needed to produce fruit. There are self fertile varieties available.

# Saucer magnolia

*Magnolia x soulangiana*



**HEIGHT:** To 25'

**SPREAD:** to 12'

**FALL COLORS:** Green to yellow

**FLOWERS:** Large flowers 6 inches across in white, pink or purplish red.

**LEAF:** **Deciduous**, Alternate, simple, oblong to obovate, 3 to 6 inches long, entire margin, green above, paler and fuzzy below.

**NATIVE:** Hybrid origin

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Beautiful specimen flowering tree for lawns, grown for short height and large flowers.

Purchase named varieties as seedling are highly variable. Native sweetbay magnolia, *Magnolia virginiana* is a good alternative for wet areas.

# Serviceberry

## *Amelanchier canadensis*



**HEIGHT:** 15'-20'

**SPREAD:** 15'-20'

**FALL COLORS:** Spectacular shades of reds, oranges and yellows.

**FLOWERS:** April, serviceberries are covered in tiny white to light pink flowers, resembling tiny single-petaled roses.

**LEAF:** Alternate, simple, ovate, finely serrate, green above and paler below, may be pubescent below, especially when young.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Besides the beautiful foliage the tree produces edible fruit which serves as a major source of food for birds like catbirds, grosbeaks, cardinals, vireos, and cedar waxwings.

# Silver Bell

*Halesia carolina*



**HEIGHT:** 30'-40'

**SPREAD:** 20'-35'

**FALL COLORS:** Yellow

**FLOWERS:** Early spring, with clusters of bell shaped white flowers.

**LEAF:** alternate, simple ovate leaves.

**NATIVE:** Native to southeastern U.S.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Great tree for naturalizing, this is also perfect tree for shady corners or in woodland borders. It is best set off against a dark background (such as evergreens) as a specimen tree, although small group plantings can also be effective. Because of its requirements for high acidity, it is best with other acid-loving plants.

# Snowbell

## *Styrax americanus*



**HEIGHT:** 15'-20'

**SPREAD:** 15'

**FALL COLORS:** Orange and scarlet to blackish purple

**FLOWERS:** White bell-shaped flowers in clusters in late spring and early summer.

**LEAF:** Narrow 5 to 8 inches

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Nice as a specimen tree or patio tree. Young trees do well in large containers. Beautiful showy tree that has year round interest. Attracts nectar insects and fruit birds. Needs wet soil.

# Sourwood

*Oxydendrum arboreum*



**HEIGHT:** 20'-25'

**SPREAD:** 20'

**FALL COLORS:** Yellow, crimson and purple

**FLOWERS:** Drooping 10 inch long fragrant white flowers in mid June to late July.

**LEAF:** Deciduous, dark green leaves are arranged along the twig in an alternate or spiral form. Leaves are simple, thin, and oblong-elliptical to oblong-lanceolate in shape. The leaf margin can be a combination of several forms.

**NATIVE:** DC, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

**LANDSCAPE VALUE:** Outstanding as a focal point, patio tree or in front of taller trees.

Among the most beautiful flowering trees and one of the best for crimson fall color.

## **Acknowledgements**

Information on trees adapted from:

Heriteau, Jacqueline and Cathey, Marc 1990. The National Arboretum Book of Outstanding Garden Plants. Simon and Schuster.

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