The Right Tree in the Right Place

Trees add greatly to our community's character and beauty. They also reduce flooding and polluted stormwater runoff by capturing water with their root systems. Quite simply, planting a tree is one of the best things you can do for your community and local environment, as long as you plant the right tree in the right place. Here are a few tips on choosing the right tree for your location and a few things you want to avoid.

Before choosing a tree it is important to consider several factors, including:

- **Height and canopy spread.** How tall and wide will it grow? Will the tree bump into anything when it is fully grown? If you want to plant something near telephone or power lines, there are plenty of options for small trees that will not interfere with the lines.
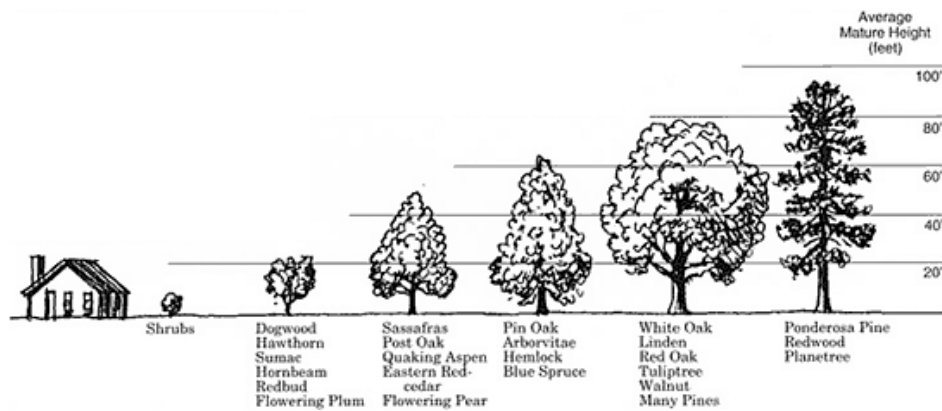
Image : Arbor Day Foundation

- **Form or shape.** A columnar tree (cherry, arborvitae) will grow in less space. Round (white oak, hornbeam, dogwood) trees require the most horizontal space, but provide the most shade.
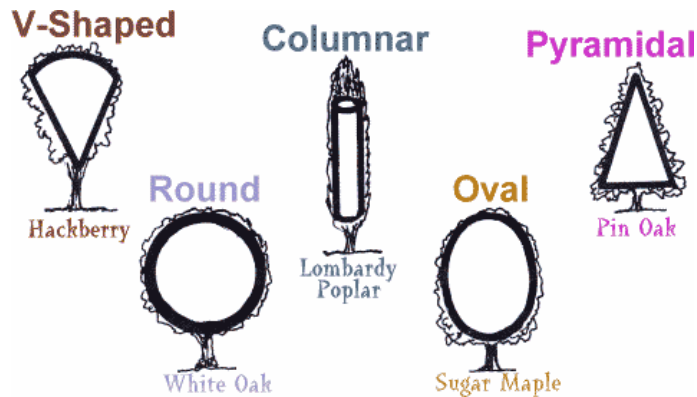
Image : Arbor Day Foundation

- **Green all year?** If you want your trees to provide a visual screen, remember that deciduous trees like oaks, maples, and ashes, will drop their leaves each fall and may not provide the visual barrier you desire in the winter. Evergreens close to the southern side of your house block warming winter sunlight. Trees on the north side of the house can block cold winter winds.

- **Growth rate.** How long will it take for your tree to reach its full height? Slow growing species typically live longer than fast growing species.

- **Soil, sun, and moisture** requirements. Think about the amount of sun your yard gets and how quickly the soil drains after a storm. Pick a tree that will thrive in that type of environment.

- **Fruit**. If the tree produces fruit, acorns, or seeds, make sure it will not interfere with other uses of the property or adjacent sidewalks. Fruit-bearing trees planted next to busy sidewalks can create a messy situation.

- **Hardiness.** Check that your tree can tolerate the temperature extremes we typically see in our region. Areas in the Philadelphia region are between USDA Hardiness Zones 6 and 8.

For more help in selecting the right tree for your yard, visit the Arbor Day Foundation's website at http://www.arborday.org/trees/treeGuide/ or talk to your local nursery.

Planting the right tree in the right place will let your tree reach its full potential.