

# Trees to Improve Your Property

Dear Clients and Friends of the Echols Team,

We encourage you to strategically plant trees, shrubs, and flowers to improve the look and property resale value of your home. Winter is the time to plant most larger plants, especially trees. Trees don't typically return increased property value right away, but over time they are one of the best investments you can make, and their shade can reduce watering demand for lawns.

The Austin American Statesman newspaper ran an article a while back on preferred central Texas trees. If you are planning to plant some to improve your landscaping or shade, we captured a copy and have it for you below. There is also some information below that the increase in property value from trees, plus a web link to tree care, including information on drought-resistant trees. These are worth archiving, in case you won't be planting until future years. Winter is the best time to plant trees.

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## “10 for Central Texas”

By Alexis Bearer -Special to the *American-Statesman* Newspaper

Central Texas summers remind us that any tree in Texas is a good tree, and the more the better.

Now [winter] is the time to plant trees, and garden centers are well-stocked. When you select a tree, remember: The tree should be well-adapted to our shallow alkaline soils, erratic rainfall and that very heat it will shade you from. With that in mind, here are my top 10 for Austin.

1. Cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*): A big tree from the hills that is actually an elm, not a cedar. It is perhaps the fastest growing of the "good" trees and a designer's favorite for its toughness and upright growth.
2. Texas red oak (*Quercus shumardii*, also *Q. texana* and *Q. buckleyi*): It is worth searching out this native among the Shumard oaks, if you have the bad soil in the south and west parts of town. It is also a fast-growing tree with a special shine to its leaves. Don't use it if you have oak wilt.
3. Live oak (*Quercus virginiana*): The Escarpment live oak (*Q. fusiformis*) is the dominant tree of our landscape, a massive evergreen with low, curvaceous branches.
4. Chinquapin oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*): Big, fairly fast-growing and very attractive with a leaf color that blends in well. I find it does better in rocky soil than most. Oak-wilt resistant.

5. Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*): Big tree with big leaves and huge acorns. It comes from east and north of us, so it is best in deeper soils. Magnificent for the right area.
6. Monterrey oak (*Quercus polymorpha*); A smaller oak, but after years of watching them, I have to admit that there is nothing our summers can do to faze this tree. Leaves have a clean bluish hue with colorful new growth and occasional purple fall color. It can be evergreen in some winters and is oak-wilt resistant.
7. Lacey oak (*Quercus laceyi*, also *Q. glaucoides*): A smaller native from our hills with bluish leaves that have a satiny sheen that turns a plum color in winter. It is slow-growing and hard to find but should be encouraged. Oak-wilt resistant.
8. Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*): The State Tree of Texas! Pecans need a bit deeper soil, but as we pour our fortunes into our yard, getting something to eat from our efforts makes sense. It is a great shade tree with somewhat brittle branches, so plant 30 feet from the house.
9. Bigtooth maple (*Acer grandidentatum*): This is a bit like Lacey oak: hard to find, and the ones you do find will be small but worth the effort nonetheless. I've seen them flourish with no irrigation, and that is something. Very pretty tree.
10. Texas ash (*Fraxinus texensis*): Our version of the green ash (*F. pennsylvanica*). It does well under many conditions, does not litter the landscape with large limbs and has a good yellow in the fall.

Alexis Bearer is an Austin landscape architect.

Suggested Tree: Cedar Elm

One of the most common trees in Central Texas, the cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) is also one of our most desirable.

It is a great tree to plant where it will have lots of room to grow. This tree can be 70 feet high at maturity. Once established, it can handle moderate drought conditions and rarely needs fertilization. It provides beautiful fall color when its small (inch-and-a-half long) serrated leaves turn golden in October.

Among the few problems of cedar elm is that squirrels love to chew its bark, weakening and sometimes killing branches of all sizes. Mistletoe, a parasite, is perhaps its only other serious pest. An arborist can advise you on caring for your tree.

-- Guy LeBlanc

For best results, buy trees grown within 150 miles of where you live.

Take a look at: [www.treefolks.org](http://www.treefolks.org)

## The Value of Trees

You know that a property with majestic trees has more curb appeal than one with only a few saplings, but trees add more to a property than just aesthetics. They can increase property values by as much as 15%, according to the National Arbor Day Foundation. Trees also decrease cooling costs, providing shade that lessens the need for air conditioning. In addition, shade from trees reduces the temperature of driveways and parking areas, which makes paved surfaces last longer.

Mature trees look great, but your home buyers should take a few minutes to look closely at the trees on a property and consider the following:

- \* Are the trees in good shape? Look behind those lush, green leaves and make sure there are strong limbs and a solid trunk.

- \* Is the species matched with its environment? If the owners planted a kind of tree that won't thrive in the heat or local soil conditions, it will probably need to be replaced sooner than its typical lifespan.

- \* Is the tree in the right location? A fairly young tree close to the house might look great now, but could cause problems as it grows older and its limbs scrape the siding or its roots disrupt the foundation. Also look for trees under power lines.

Visit the Texas Native Trees Web site

<http://texastreeplanting.tamu.edu/ViewAllTrees.aspx> , hosted by Texas A&M University, for more information about the trees you see on or near properties. Search for a tree type by its name or appearance. Buyers can learn about a tree's water requirements, heat tolerance, and bloom period. Owners can use the same information to educate potential buyers about their property's added value from trees or plant trees for the future.