



The Beauty of Trees

Selecting the right tree for your own piece of paradise can be difficult. Sandra Batley guides us through what to consider and offers some handy hints when planting one in your own garden.

MOST PEOPLE LOVE THE SCENIC beauty of trees in the landscape. What would be a landscape without them? They improve the quality of air we breathe and they beautify our homes, parks, cities and landscapes.

But, when you are planting them in your garden they can block drains, cast shadows, hide important views, undermine walls and foundations and cause a real headache. That is why it is vital that you choose the right tree for the right place and take responsibility

for ensuring your own trees do not cause problems for anyone else now or in the future.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

In a small suburban garden, trees provide structure and height. However there are a few things to think about before rushing out and buying 'just any old tree' to plant in your backyard. If there is one major mistake people make in their gardens, it is that they forget that plants grow! Consider

carefully the mature size and shape of the trees you want to plant. It is best to consult with your landscape designer or staff at your local garden centre to help you choose the right tree for your particular situation.

ABOVE RIGHT clearing leaves can be a lot of work with deciduous trees.

FAR RIGHT The silk tree with its fluffy pink flowers is great in warmer climates.



PROVIDE SHADE AND SHELTER

Deciduous trees will provide shade in summer but allow sun through the winter. Evergreens on the other hand provide year round shade. Keep in mind the type of deciduous tree you plant. The leaf drop can prove to be a lot of work if leaves fall into your gutters, swimming pools and onto paved areas. Evergreens provide structure in the garden; however they do cast a shadow. So once again carefully consider the location of the tree, so you are not blocking out valuable light indoors.

Trees and shrubs can also create a living fence and windbreak in the garden. They provide all the benefits of a built fence with the additional advantage of flowers, foliage and scent. There are a number of shrubs and trees both native and exotic that grow superbly in a variety of situations such as:

- ▶ Griselinia littoralis
- ▶ Camellia spp.
- ▶ Pittosporum spp.
- ▶ Photina 'Red robin'
- ▶ Corokia spp.
- ▶ Eugenia ventinatii
- ▶ Podocarpus totora

SCREENING AND PRIVACY

Trees can provide privacy for your home and outdoor living areas. Evergreen trees are best if you require screening. However, you do need to be very careful about what type of tree you plant. Planting a tree that eventually grows too big for the space or is too close to you or your neighbour's home can cause problems. If the trunk of the tree extends over the boundary, this does not give you the right to chop it down. A tree planted on your neighbour's land belongs to them, and they will be liable for any damage it causes. If your neighbour's tree is causing problems, the first step is to talk to them. A mutually agreeable solution will certainly be preferable to a lengthy and costly legal battle.



Silk Tree

Albizia julibrissin, or silk tree is a favourite shade tree for small gardens in warm climates. Its umbrella like form offers shade and has the added bonus of outstanding pink fluffy flowers and attractive ferny foliage.



Camellia

Plant trees or shrubs on the south side of your house, where they will help to filter and divert southerly winds. Or plant roadside to help with noise control.



Hornbeam



Cabbage Tree



Pohutukawa

BEAUTIFICATION

New Zealand's varied climate means there is an extraordinary choice of trees for your garden for every season. Trees, when accompanied with other shrubs and flowers, help to create an impressive garden for any site or situation. Some bring dramatic seasonal colour to gardens. Others provide year-round interest with colourful bark, flowers, leaves or fruit. Many of our native trees such as Vitex lucens (puriri), Metrosideros spp. (pohutukawa), Sophora spp. (kowhai) and Cordyline australis (cabbage tree) are important food sources for birds, so play an important role in attracting birds back into an urban garden. ■



Kowhai



If you are limited for space, try pleaching. This is the practice of pruning trees to create decorative standard hedges. The advantage is you can control the height and width of trees, without blocking all your light and sun. Good trees to pleach are evergreen alder, olive, titoki and hornbeam.

Sandra Batley of flourish is a multi award-winning landscape designer based in Auckland, with a passion for people, plants and design. Visit Sandra at www.flourishgardens.co.nz



Red Maple



Australian Frangipani

Trees are your best antiques.
~ Alexander Smith

TOP 10 TREES FOR SMALL GARDENS

- ▶ Acer palmatum spp - Maple tree
- ▶ Magnolia - Little Gem
- ▶ Metrosideros excelsa - Pohutukawa
- ▶ Hymenosporum flavum - Australian Frangipani
- ▶ Meryta sinclairii - Puka
- ▶ Albizia julibrissin - Silk Tree
- ▶ Cercis canadensis - Forest Pansy
- ▶ Sophora microphylla - Kowhai
- ▶ Alectryon excelsus - Titoki
- ▶ Prunus lusitanica - Portugese Laurel



Forest Pansy



Little Gem Magnolia



Olive Tree

Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.
~ Martin Luther