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Recommended Alternatives to Ash Trees for Michigan's Lower Peninsula Michigan State University Michigan State University Extension Bert Cregg, Department of Horticulture; Robert Schutzki, Department of Forestry Revised January 2006 12 pages

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#### **Extension Bulletin E-2925**



# **Recommended Alternatives to Ash Trees for Michigan's Lower Peninsula**

Bert Cregg and Robert Schutzki Michigan State University Department of Horticulture and Department of Forestry





his guide gives suggestions for species that should be considered in situations where a homeowner, landscaper, or urban forester may have planted an ash in the past. General species characteristics, mature form and size, and other noteworthy characteristics are given; all are hardy to at least zone 5. Diversity of species is also important. Look around you, and plant a variety trees.

## 'Autumn blaze' Freeman maple Acer x freemanii

Height: 50-55 ft. Spread: 30-40 ft.

- Site preferences: Zone 4-7. Prefers moist soil but is drought tolerant. pH: adaptable. Fast growing.
- **Ornamental characteristics:** Shape: oval-rounded. Foliage has excellent orange-red fall color.

Insect/disease factors: None serious.

Cultivars: Marmo, Sienna Glen

## Hedge maple Acer campestre

Height: 25-30 ft. Spread: 25-30 ft.

Ornamental

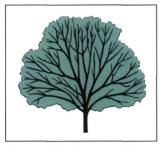
Site preferences: Zone 5a-8b. Sun to partial shade. Tolerates drought. Moderate salt tolerance. pH: 5.0-8.2. Adapted to compaction, severe pruning.



- characteristics: Shape: round. Excellent residential use under utility lines. Easily transplanted in spring or fall. Cultivars: 'Queen Elizabeth' (more upright, vigorous [zone 6b-7b]); 'Schichtel's Upright' (5b-8b). Introduced from Europe, Near East and Africa.
- **Insect/disease factors:** Occasional problems with verticillium wilt.

#### Trident maple Acer buergeranum

Height: 20-25 ft.
Spread: 20-35 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 5b or 6a-8a. Prefers full sun.
Adapted to urban conditions. Moderate salt tolerance. Tolerates moderate drought. pH: 5.0-7.0.



#### Ornamental characteristics:

Shape: round. Mottled bark, shedding with age; dense, dark green leaves turning orange to red in the fall. Introduced from China.

Insect/disease factors: None serious.

#### Miyabe maple Acer miyabei

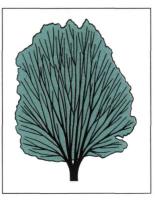
Height: 30-40 ft. Spread: 20-30 ft. Site preferences: Zone 4-7.

Moist, well-drained soil. pH: adaptable.

#### **Ornamental characteristics:**

Shape: rounded. Insect/disease factors: None serious.

**Cultivars:** 'State Street' fast growing, upright oval habit, dark green leaves with yellow fall color, corky bark.





## Norway maple Acer platanoides

Height: 40-50 ft. Spread: 30-50 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 4-7. Prefers moist soils and will tolerate clay (but not wet) soil. pH: very adaptable.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: rounded. Foliage is dark green with occasionally good yellow fall color.

Insect/disease factors:

Verticillium wilt and anthracnose.

**Cultivars:** 'Crimson King' — reddish purple foliage; 'Columnare' — narrow oval habit (20-ft. spread); 'Summershade' — fast growing, heat resistant; 'Easy Street' — narrow oval.

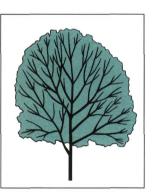
## Red maple Acer rubrum

#### Height: 40-60 ft.

- Site preferences: Zone 3b-9a. Moist soils necessary; flood tolerance of specific cultivars is listed below. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-7.0 (chlorosis occurs at high pH).
- Ornamental characteristics:
- Shape: round, upright. Good fall color.
- Insect/disease factors:

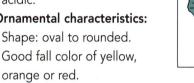
Leafhopper and borers.

Cultivars: 'Autumn Flame' (early, low flood tolerance, persistent red fall color, zone 3b); 'Northwood' (low flood tolerance, good orange-red fall color, zone 3b); 'October Glory' (intermediate flood tolerance, excellent red fall color, zone 5a); 'Red Skin' (large, thick foliage, early reddish maroon fall color, rare, zone 4); 'Red Sunset'. Transplant in spring, high flood tolerance, specify "own-rooted" — graft incompatibility can be a problem. 'Redpointe' — pyramidal with dominant central leader.



#### Sugar maple Acer saccharum

Height: 60-80 ft.
Spread: 40-50 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 4-8. Prefers moist, well-drained soil. pH: neutral to slightly acidic.
Ornamental characteristics:





Insects/disease factors: verticillium wilt, leaf scorch. Cultivars: 'Crescendo' — dark green foliage with good orange-red fall color, heat and drought tolerant; 'Green Mountain' — thick, dark green leaves that resist leaf scorch, yellow fall color; 'Legacy' — thick and glossy dark green leaves, drought tolerant, yellow-orange fall color.

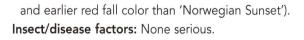
#### Shantung maple Acer truncatum

Height: 25-30 ft. Spread: 20-30 ft. Site preferences: Zone 5a-7b (species is variable; hybrid cultivars, zone 5). Requires moist, well-drained site; tolerates moderate drought. Moderate salt tolerance. pH: 5.0-8.2. Resistant to leaf scorch.



Shape: round. Dark green, glossy leaves with early fall color of yellow-orange to bright red.

**Cultivars:** Hybrids of *A. platanoides* are 'Norwegian Sunset' (upright round, orange-red to red fall color, more heat and drought tolerant than *A. platanoides*) and 'Pacific Sunset' (upright oval, finer branched









## Horse chestnut Aesculus hippocasteana

Height: 50 ft. -75 ft. Spread: 40 ft. -70 ft. Site preferences: Zone 4-8. Prefers moist, welldrained soils. pH: adaptable.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: rounded. Other: showy white flowers in mid-May.

Insect/disease factors: Leaf scorch can occur under hot/dry conditions in late summer.

**Cultivars:** 'Baumanii' more showy with longer lasting flowers and seedless.

## American hornbeam Carpinus caroliniana

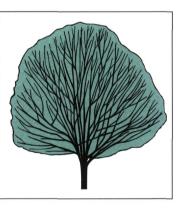
Height: 20-30 ft. Spread: 20-30 ft. Site preferences: Zone 3b-9a. Prefers moist soil but will tolerate some intermittent drought. pH: 5.0-8.2. Prefers shaded, moist soils.

Ornamental characteris-

tics: Shape: round,

spreading. "Muscled" bark, good orange-red fall color, clumps or single stem.

- **Insect/disease factors:** Relatively pest and disease free, requires little maintenance, though damage by ice storms can be a problem. Cankers can occur with specimens of southern origin, so it is important to know the source of the tree.
- Additional: Transplant in spring; somewhat slow to establish. Native to Michigan and eastern United States.



## Upright European hornbeam Carpinus betulus 'Fastigiata'

Height: 35 ft. Spread: 25 ft.

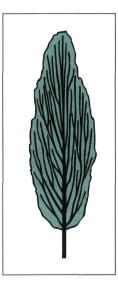
## Site preferences: Zone 5a-7a.

Tolerates drought, heavy soil. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-8.2.

#### Ornamental characteristics:

Shape: narrow when young, becoming oval; narrow branching angles.

- **Insect/disease factors:** Canker, leaf spot and twig blight can occur if the tree is stressed.
- **Additional:** Transplant in spring; somewhat slow to establish from bare root.



## Hackberry Celtis occidentalis

Height: 40-60 ft. Spread: 30 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 3b-8b. Tolerates drought. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-8.2. Tolerates light shade, wind. heat.

Ornamental characteris-

tics: Shape: pyramidal when young; open, irregular when mature, with dark green, leathery leaves.

Insect/disease factors:

Witch's broom and insect

galls (aesthetic but not life-threatening problems). **Cultivars:** 'Prairie Pride' (rapid, compact grower; thick,

- leathery foliage).
- **Additional:** Transplant in spring; somewhat slow to establish.



## Katsura tree Cercidiphyllum japonicum

Height: 40 ft. Spread: 40 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 5a-9a. Requires evenly moist soils; not drought tolerant. pH: 5.0-8.2. Does not tolerate compaction or heavy soils; tolerates light shade. Protected site best.

#### Ornamental characteristics:

Shape: upright, pyramidal when young, becoming rounded with age.

New leaves are bright red when unfolding; good yellow fall color; dry leaves have caramel scent; clump or single stem.

Insect/disease factors: None serious.

#### Yellowwood Cladrastis kentukea

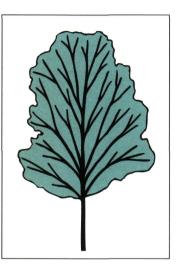
#### Height: 30 ft. Spread: 40 ft. Site preferences:

Zone 4b-8a. Best in moist, well- drained soils; not drought tolerant. pH: 5.0-8.2.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: round. Bright green foliage; showy, fragrant flowers in late spring.

#### Insect/disease factors: None.

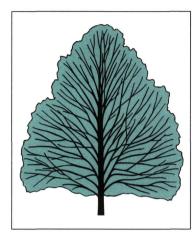
Additional: Prune only in summer — profuse bleeding will occur at other times of the year. Specify single leader — can be weak-wooded with poor crotch angles that split out as the trees grow older. Transplant in spring.



## Turkish filbert Corylus colurna

Height: 40-50 ft.
Spread: 20-30 ft.
Site preferences: Zone
4-7. Drought tolerant once established. pH: adaptable.
Ornamental characteristics: Shape: broad pyramidal, maintains formal shape. Other: attractive dark green foliage.
Insect/disease factors:

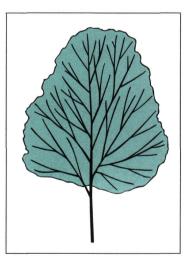
None serious.



**Additional:** This is a low-maintenance but attractive species that is quite underused.

#### Hardy rubber tree Eucommia ulmoides

Height: 40-60 ft.
Spread: 45 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 5b-8.2. Tolerates drought; intolerant of poor drainage. pH: 5.0-8.2. Tolerates heat; needs full sun.
Ornamental characteristics: Shape: round, wide, spreading with ascending branches. Glossy green foliage.
Insect/disease factors:



None.

Additional: Transplants easily in spring or fall.



## Gingko Gingko biloba

Height: 40-50 ft.

- **Spread:** Variable, depending on cultivar.
- Site preferences: Zone 4b-8b. Tolerates drought. Moderate salt tolerance. pH: 5.0-8.2.
- **Ornamental characteristics:**

Shape: irregular when young, becoming pyramidal with age. Yellow fall color.

**Cultivars:** 'Autumn Gold' (symmetrical, broad, out-

standing fall color); 'Lakeview'; and 'Princeton Sentry' (very narrow upright); 'Presidential Gold' (broadly oval, well branched).

Additional: Specify male trees because of noxious fruit smell (all cultivars are male). Transplant in spring or fall. Insect/disease factors: None serious.

# **Thornless honeylocust** Gleditsia triacanthos inermis

Height: 40-100 ft. Spread: 40 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 4b-

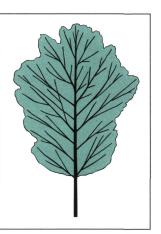
9a. Tolerates wet and dry sites. High salt tolerance. pH: 5.0-8.2.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: Open, spreading. Insect/disease factors:

Overplanting has encouraged severe insect problems in many areas (honeylocust

plant bug, spider mite, borer, webworm).

- **Cultivars:** 'Shademaster' (high, vase-shaped canopy, essentially fruitless); 'Skyline' (upright, pyramidal, strong central leader, good fall color); 'Northern Acclaim' (most cold hardy, good form).
- **Additional:** Transplants easily in spring. 'Inermis' refers to the thornless selection.

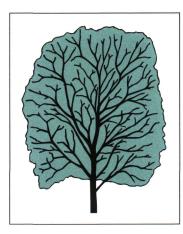


### Kentucky coffee tree Gymnocladus dioicus

Height: 60-75 ft. Spread: 40-50 ft. Site preferences: Zone 3b-8. Drought tolerant after establishment. pH: adaptable.

## Ornamental characteris-

tics: Shape: oval crown with irregular branching. Foliage is dark green with compound leaves; can sometimes have a good yellow fall color.



Insect/disease factors: None serious.

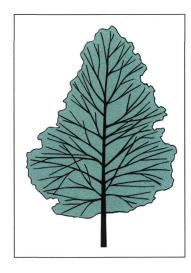
**Cultivars:** 'Prairie Titan' — nice branching habit and bluegreen summer foliage. 'Espresso' — seedless, good form.

#### Sweetgum Liquidambar styraciflua

Height: 70-100 ft. Spread: 40-65 ft. Site preferences: Zone 5b-9a. Tolerates intermittent flooding, moderate drought. pH: 5.0-7.5. Best on moist, sunny sites.

Ornamental characteris-

tics: Shape: pyramidal when young, becoming round with age. Excellent fall color. Fruit litter may be objectionable.



Insect/disease factors: None serious.

**Cultivars:** 'Moraine' (most cold hardy, zone 4b, bright red fall color); 'Rotundaloba' (fruitless, not as hardy); 'Worplesdon' (orange-red fall color, broadly pyramidal to oval).

**Additional:** Northern seed source recommended. Transplant in spring. Iron chlorosis can occur.



## Tulip tree Liriodendron tulipifera

Height: 80-120 ft. Spread: 35-50 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 5a-9a. Requires evenly moist soils but does not tolerate poor drainage. Needs adequate space. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-8.2.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: broad pyramidal. Yellow fall color. Somewhat weak-wooded.

Insect/disease factors: Occasional problems with leaf scorch, canker, and verticillium wilt.

**Additional:** Transplant in spring. Northern seed source recommended.

## Amur maackia Maackia amurensis

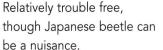
Height: 20-30 ft. Spread: 30 ft. Site preferences: Zone 4-7. Moist, well-drained soil. pH: adaptable. Ornamental characteristics: Shape: rounded. White flowers in June; copper-brown, peeling, attractive bark.

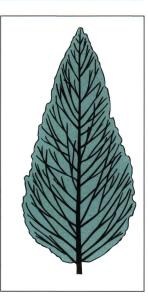


Insect/disease factors: None serious.

## Dawn redwood Metasequoia glyptostroboides

Height: 70-100 ft.
Spread: 25 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 5b-9a. Requires moist sites, will not tolerate dry sites. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-7.5.
Ornamental characteristics: Shape: pyramidal. Lower branches need to be removed for streetside use. Fast growing.
Insect/disease factors:





Additional: Transplant in spring or fall.

#### **Tupelo** Nyssa sylvatica

Height: 35 ft.
Spread: 20 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 5a-9a. Tolerates wet sites, intermittent drought.
Relatively salt tolerant.
pH: 5.5-7.0.
Ornamental characteristics: Shape: pyramidal.
Bright red fall color.

Insect/disease factors: None.

Additional: Difficult to transplant — use small sizes, balled and



burlapped only. Slow to recover from transplanting. Transplant in spring.



## American hophornbeam Ostrya virginiana

Height: 40 ft. Spread: 25 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 3b-9a. Prefers moist soil but will tolerate moderately dry soils once established. Very salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-8.2. Tolerates light shade.

**Ornamental characteristics:** Shape: upright oval. Foliage is dark green; fall

color is yellow. Slow growing.

Insect/disease factors: None.

**Additional:** Slow to recover from transplanting. Transplant in spring.

## Amur corktree Phellodendron amurense

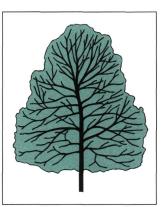
Height: 30-45 ft. Spread: 40-50 ft. Site preferences: Zone 3b-7. Drought and pollution tolerant. pH: adaptable.

Ornamental charac-

**teristics:** Shape: broad, rounded. Yellow to bronze-yellow fall color. Ridged, corky bark in old age.

Insect/disease factors: None serious.

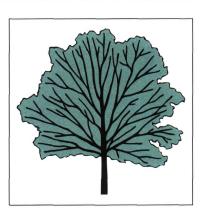
Cultivars: 'Eye Stopper' 'His Majesty' 'Macho'



#### London planetree Platanus x acerifolia

Height: 50 ft. Spread: 40 ft. Site preferences: Zone 5b-9a. Tolerates wet and intermittently flooded sites; drought tolerant. Salt tolerant. pH: 5.0-8.2. Ornamental charac-

teristics: Shape: pyramidal when



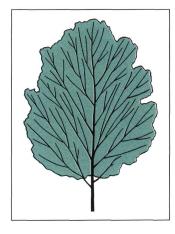
young, becoming open, spreading with age. Medium green foliage, exfoliating bark.

Insect/disease factors: Overplanting has encouraged disease and insect problems in New York City. 'Liberty' resistant to anthracnose and powdery mildew; 'Bloodgood' moderately resistant. Cankerstain may be a problem.
 Cultivars: 'Bloodgood' (maple-green foliage; tolerates severe pruning; rapid grower); 'Liberty'.

Additional: Transplant in spring or fall.

## Common chokecherry Prunus virginiana

Height: 20-30 ft.
Spread: 18-25 ft.
Site preferences: Zone 2-6. Tolerant of moist and dry sites.
pH: adaptable.
Ornamental
characteristics: Shape: rounded. White flowers in early May, red fruit that ripen to a dark purple.
Insect/disease factors: Black knot.



**Cultivars:** 'Schubert' and 'Canada Red' — foliage emerges green but changes to a reddish purple for the remainder of the growing season; pyramidal habit.



## Callery pear Pyrus calleryana

Height: 50 ft. Spread: 30 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 5-8. Tolerant of moist and dry sites.

pH: adaptable. Ornamental

**characteristics:** Shape: formal rounded pyramidal. Foliage is glossy dark

green; good red to purplish fall color. White flowers in late April or early May.

Insect/disease factors: Fire blight.

**Cultivars:** 'Aristocrat' — wider shape, yellow to red fall color; 'Red spire' — pyramidal habit, yellow fall color; 'Chanticleer' — oval to narrow oval.

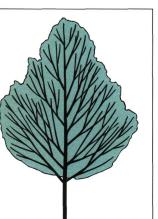
## Sawtooth oak Quercus acutissima

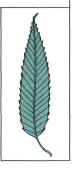
Height: 40 ft. Spread: 40 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 5b or 6a-9a. Tolerates moderately dry soils. Moderate salt tolerance. pH: 5.0-7.5. Good growth rate in moist sites.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: rounded. Foliage is dark green, glossy. Fall color is yellow.

**Insect/disease factors:** Reasonably pest free; preferred by orange-striped oakworm.





## Swamp white oak Quercus bicolor

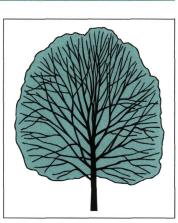
Height: 45 ft. Spread: 45 ft. Site preferences: Zone 4a-8b. Tolerates temporary flooding, wet soils and somewhat dry soils. Salt sensitive. pH: 5.0-7.0.

#### Ornamental

characteristics: Shape: broad oval with round top. Foliage is green with wavy margins.

#### Insect/disease factors:

None serious. Variable susceptibility to iron chlorosis.





## Northern pin oak Quercus ellipsoidalis

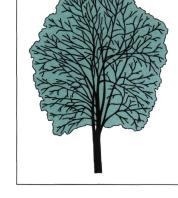
Height: 50-60 ft. Spread: 50 ft. Site preferences:

Zone 4-6. Prefers moist, well-drained soil but tolerates wet and dry conditions. pH: neutral to slightly acidic.

#### Ornamental

characteristics: Shape: pyramidal. Can have nice fall color.

#### Insect/disease factors: Stem and leaf galls.



**Additional:** Does not have the chlorosis problems that occur in pin oak.



## Shingle oak Quercus imbricaria

## Height: 50 ft.

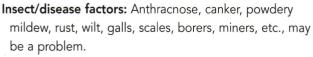
#### Spread: 40 ft.

#### Site preferences:

Zone 5a-9a. Prefers moist soil but will tolerate intermittent drought. pH: 5.0-7.5.

#### Ornamental

characteristics: Shape: broadly oval. Foliage is dark green, glossy. Fall color is yellowish to rusty red.



**Additional:** Slow to recover from transplanting. Transplants well in spring.

## Bur oak Quercus macrocarpa

#### Height: 55 ft. Spread: 45 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 3a-9a. Tolerates drought and intermittent flooding. pH: 5.0-8.2.

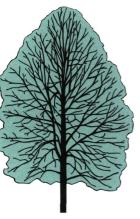
Ornamental characteristics:

Shape: broadly oval, irregular and open. Foliage is dark green. Fall color is yellow to yellow-brown. Corky bark.

#### Insect/disease factors:

Susceptible to anthracnose, intermediate preference by orange-striped oakworm but generally not seriously affected.

Additional: Slow growing, massive tree needs adequate space. Transplant small sizes in spring.





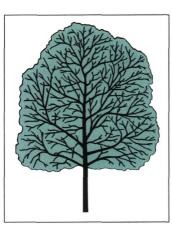
#### Chinkapin oak Quercus muehlenbergii

Height: 45 ft.
Spread: 45 ft.
Site preferences: Zone
5a-8b. Tolerates moderate drought. pH: 5.0-8.2.
Extremely tolerant of alkaline soil.

#### Ornamental

characteristics: Shape: rounded, open. Foliage is lustrous dark green. Fall color is yellow to yellow-brown.

**Insect/disease factors:** None serious. **Additional:** Transplant in spring.



## Japanese pagodatree Sophora japonica

Height: 50-70 ft. Spread: 40-70 ft. Site preferences:

Zone 5b-9a. Tolerates drought. Salt tolerant. pH: 5.0-8.2.

#### Ornamental characteristics: Shape: dense, round. Attractive cream-colored flowers

in late July.



'Regent' resistant to leafhoppers, twig dieback and stem canker in colder zones.

**Cultivars:** 'Princeton Upright' (upright); 'Regent' (rapid growth, profuse flowering, resistant to leaf chewers). **Additional:** Fixes own nitrogen. Transplant in spring or fall. Somewhat weak wooded.







## Linden or Basswood Tilia americana

Height: 35-50 ft. Spread: 25-30 ft. Site preferences: Zone 3a-8a. Requires moist, well-drained sites but will tolerate intermittent

drought once established. Salt sensitive. pH: 6.5-8.2.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: narrow to broad pyramidal, depending on cultivar.

Foliage is light green to dark green, depending on cultivar. Fragrant flowers in June.

- **Insect/disease factors:** Very susceptible to Japanese beetles; mites, aphids, borers, leaf miners and scale may also be problematic.
- **Cultivars:** 'Boulevard' (narrowly pyramidal, hardy to zone 3); Legend® (broadly pyramidal, zone 4, medium green); 'Redmond' (pyramidal, light green foliage).

Additional: Transplant in spring or fall.

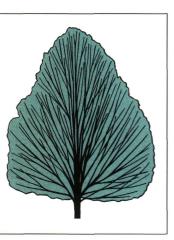
## Little-leaf linden Tilia cordata

# Height: 60-70 ft. Spread: 40-50 ft.

Site preferences: Zone 3b-7. Prefers

moist, well-drained soil. pH: adaptable. Pollution tolerant.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: rounded and densely branched. Yellowish, fragrant flowers that emerge in late June.



**Insects/disease factors:** Japanese beetle, aphids, scab and linden mite.

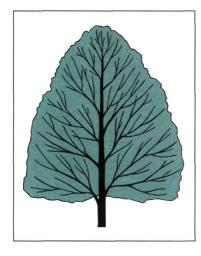
**Cultivars:** 'Greenspire' — single leader and nice branching form; 'June Bride' — more formal habit and greater flowering; 'Harvest Gold' — very hardy, bright yellow fall color.

#### Silver linden Tilia tomentosa

Height: 50-70 ft. Spread: 30-50 ft. Site preferences: Zone 3b-7. Prefers moist, well-drained soils but is somewhat drought and heat tolerant.

pH: adaptable.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: upright oval. Glassy dark green leaves that are silvery underneath.



Yellowish white, fragrant flowers in early July.

**Insect/disease factors:** Same as little-leaf linden but less susceptible.

**Cultivars:** 'Green Mountain' — fast growing, better drought and heat tolerance; 'Sterling' — broad pyramidal habit, resistant to Japanese beetle.



## Elm hybrids Ulmus spp.

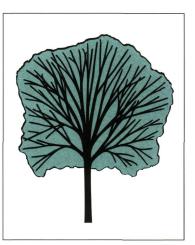
Height: 40-50 ft. Spread: 30-50 ft. Site preferences: Zone varies. Tolerates intermittent flooding and drought once established. pH: 5.0-8.2.

Ornamental characteristics: Shape: upright vase.

**Cultivars:** Cultivars reportedly resistant to Dutch elm disease:

Hybrids: 'Accolade' 'Commendation' 'Frontier' 'Homestead' 'New Horizon' 'Triumph'

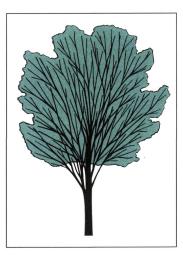
American: 'Valley Forge' 'Princeton' 'Jefferson'



#### Japanese zelkova Zelkova serrata

Height: 50-80 ft. Spread: 40-50 ft. Site preferences: Zone 5. Prefers moist, well-drained soil but is drought tolerant. pH: adaptable.

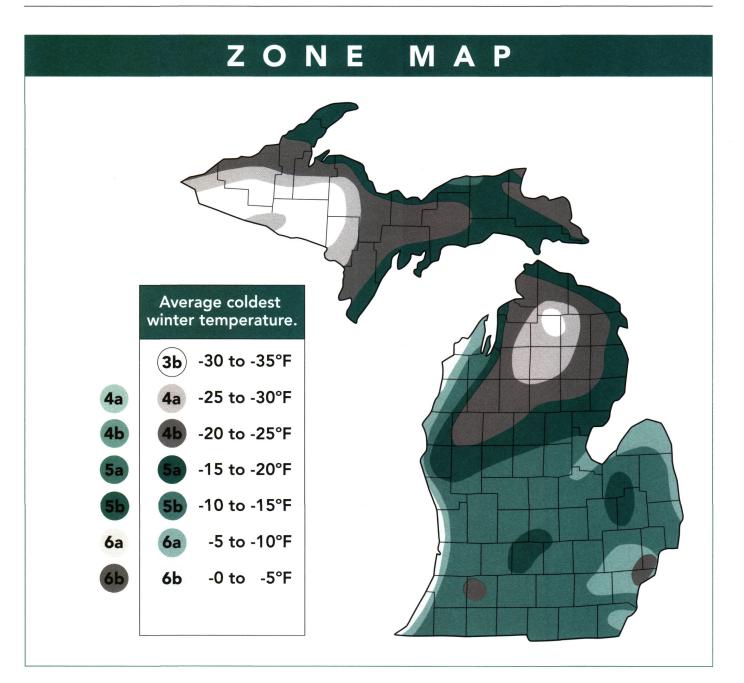
Ornamental characteristics: Shape: vaseshaped. Foliage has rusty orange fall color. Flaky, attractive bark. Insect/disease factors: None serious.



**Cultivars:** 'Green Vase' — fast growing, nice branching habit, good fall color.

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