

TREE PROBLEMS

by Stanley Rachesky

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Every year thousands of people send in twig, bark and leaf specimens, requesting information on the problems incurred with their trees. Many times the tree is diagnosed as having a "terminal" disease or insect problem. Because trees are such long lived plants, very often it is extremely hard for the property owner to accept the fact that this beautiful part of his landscape is going to die and should be replaced, if possible.

Most tree problems can be prevented. The selection of the tree species should be given careful thought. Over 300 tree species can be used for shade and ornamental purposes in Illinois. However, only about 15 to 20 have been planted to any great extent. American elm, pin oak, American sycamore, white oak, some species of crabapple and hawthorne are the most frequently planted trees and the most commonly affected by disease and insect problems. Because of the susceptibility to disease and insects these species of trees should only be planted in very limited numbers.

When selecting a tree, one should consider the following points: Cold hardiness; resistance to insects and disease problems; adaptability to soils; size; susceptibility to transplanting, drought, ice and wind; appearance (leaves, flowers, fruit, bark), availability in the area, and the rate of growth.

Trees represent a sizable investment. They must be maintained properly. In well planned landscaping program property values will be increased, future maintenance costs will be lowered, and the landowner will benefit by protecting his premises from sun, wind, dust and noise.

Trees are taken for granted more often than not. Very little thought is normally given to them . . . until they die or become damaged and must be removed. There are a number of substitute tree species that are readily available from any nurseries. Tree species that are relatively free of problems are: European black alder, ash (selected species and varieties), European beech, American cork tree, crabapple and hawthornes of selected species for disease resistance, dogwood (special flower selection), Chinese elm, Douglas fir, conifer fir, ginkgo (male only), European hornbeam, hop hornbeam, Crimean linden, littleleaf linden, magnolia, red maple, Norway maple, sugar maple, English oak, red oak, red pine, Scotch pine, white pine, London plane tree, purple leaf plum, redbud, hardy rubber tree, sassafras, spruce, and tulip tree.

Because Illinois is such a long state, some of these trees thrive well only in certain parts. Select your tree carefully.

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