

Group trees & shrubs by plant needs

The most striking combination of plants will not succeed if their environmental needs are dissimilar.

By LORI MAKRUSKI



Makruski: symmetrical balance for 'mirror images'.

Most plants require fairly specific growing conditions such as shade or sun, wet or dry feet and acidic or alkaline soil.

Oak Leaf hydrangea (*Hydrangea quercifolia*); PJM Rhododendrons, and all varieties of Azaleas are examples of plants that will thrive together if placed in acidic soil, with a semi-shaded, protected exposure.

Contrasting attributes

People are attracted to certain plants because of their characteristics: color, texture, form, habit, size or attractive fruit; foliage or flowers. Interesting combinations are formed by pairing different plant characteristics. For example, an evergreen shrub such as *Juniperus chinensis* 'Hetzl Glauca' with its upright spreading form and light blue-green awl-shaped leaves and a small- to medium-sized tree with interesting bark in the foreground, such as the

Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*) is a stunning combination in the landscape.

Achieve balance

Creating harmonious proportions, whether in contrast with each other or with their surroundings, is important when selecting plant partners.

Symmetrical balance creates mirror images in the landscape and often is used in formal settings.

Asymmetrical balance combines plant material of unequal size, shape, color and texture, and is used when an informal or natural look is desired.

A grouping of the old-fashioned Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangiana*) in the corner of a sunny, backyard border, with a mixture of spring and summer-flowering shrubs, and a tall, evergreen *Picea abies* 'Pendula' (Weeping Norway Spruce) is an example of a natural, yet balanced border.

Prolong seasonal interest

Most plants stand out in the landscape for a limited time during the year.

By selecting and combining trees and shrubs whose outstanding characteristics occur in different seasons, we extend the landscape's appearance year 'round. In a semi-shaded area, a striking plant combination is achieved by grouping the tall-growing, finely-textured, evergreen Canadian Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) with the spreading, dense summer-flowering shrub, Bottle Brush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*). Add spring flowering deciduous trees such as the Eastern Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) and a fall fruit-bearing shrub, for instance Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia* 'Brilliantissima') for brilliant red fall foliage and persistent red fruits.

The author manages the Landscape Management Division of Urban Environments, Inc., Columbus, Ohio.

TREES THAT TOLERATE WET SOILS

Species	Height	Wildlife value
<i>Acer rubrum</i> (red maple)	120'	Good summer cover for birds; mammals eat seeds, flowers, buds.
<i>Alnus</i> spp. (alder)	45-75'	Excellent cover and nest sites; goldfinches; siskins, redpolls love the seeds; persists into winter.
<i>Ilex</i> spp. (holly)	24-70'	Excellent cover; fruits are favored by many birds. flowers attract bees.
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> (black tupelo)	90'	Wood duck, wild turkey, robin, pileated woodpecker, mockingbird, brown thrasher, thrushes, flicker eat dark blue fruit in fall.
<i>Salix</i> spp. (willow)	35-50'	Good nest site; butterflies and bees use nectar; buds eaten by pine grosbeak, rabbits, squirrels, grouse.