

## Trees and Shrubs for Small Spaces

### I. Defining "Small."

#### A. By comparing available space to plant needs/potential:

##### 1. Root space

Available space versus the plant's normal need

Common for plant roots to spread 1-1/2 to 2 x crown

Some species are tolerant of cramped roots

##### 2. Vertical space

Available headroom versus plant potential

Some plants conform gracefully to limited space

Some plants de-form if space is tight

##### 3. Crown space

Width of space versus plant potential

Many designers consider height but overlook width

#### B. By comparing the plant to the majority in its category

##### 1. A small tree is 25' tall or less

##### 2. A small shrub is less than 10' tall

##### 3. A dwarf: Is a cultivar/hybrid that is smaller than its species' norm

#### C. Small trees and trees in small spaces : Be realistic.

##### 1. If it's truly a small tree:

It may look like a shrub unless pruned with sure purpose

It probably won't be a good source of shade

It may grow slowly

Many such species are from the understory, stressed if fully exposed

##### 2. If its potential is greater than the given space:

It may conform, and never reach its potential (like a fish in a tank)

It may be stressed and require extra attention

Prune regularly after height or width reach maximum allowable

It may be short-term; replacement may eventually be necessary

#### D. Small shrubs and shrubs in small spaces: Be realistic.

##### 1. If it's truly small

It may be quite slow growing

It usually won't need replacing over time

##### 2. If it's in a too-small space:

It may require pruning once it reaches allowable height or width

It may sucker heavily, becoming wider than its "norm"

Its bloom or performance may not meet your expectations.

#### E. Dwarf plants: Realities

##### 1. Usually slow growing

##### 2. If not slow growing, be aware "dwarfs" can grow large over time

Ultimate size uncertain on many of these "new" plants, and

Dwarf form of 100-ft. species may reach 50'

## II. The plants

Note: If you are in zone 4, avoid the lined-out items; if in zone 3, look to the \*'s)

### A. Focal point plants: those with at least 3-season interest, 4-seasons better

#### 1. Weeping plants

Weeping peashrub\* (*Caragana arborescens* 'Walker')  
Weeping Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Pendula')  
~~Lace Leaf Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum dissectum* cultivars)~~  
Weeping Blue Atlantic Cedar (*Cedrus atlanticus glauca* 'Pendula')  
Dwarf Sargent crabapple (*Malus sargentii* 'Tina')  
Weeping White Pine\* (*Pinus strobus* 'Pendula')  
Weeping Hemlock\* (*Tsuga canadensis* 'Sargentii')

#### 2. Variegated or unusual foliage

~~Fern Leaf Japanese Maple (*Acer japonicum*)~~  
Korean maple (*Acer pseudosieboldianum*)  
Trost's Dwarf weeping birch (*Betula pendula* 'Trost's Dwarf')  
Variegated Japanese Aralia (*Aralia elata* 'Variegata' or 'Silver Umbrella')  
~~Purple leaf Redbud (*Cereis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy')~~  
Variegated Red Twig Dogwood\* (*Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima')  
Variegated Pagoda Dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia* 'Argentea')  
~~Carol Maekie Daphne (*Daphne* 'Carol Maekie')~~  
Ginkgo cultivars\* (*Ginkgo biloba* cultivars)  
Golden- & laceleaf American elder\* (*Sambucus canadensis* varieties)  
Hybrid leatherleaf *Viburnum* (*V. x rhytidophylloides* 'Alleghany')

#### 3. Outstanding Flower

Pink flower Kousa Dogwood (*Cornus kousa* 'Satomi')  
Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)  
Tree Peony (*Paeonia suffruticosa*)  
Dwarf Lilac\* (*Syringa meyeri* 'Palibin', *S. patula* 'Miss Kim')  
Sargent *Viburnum* (*V. sargentii* 'Onondaga'\*)

#### 4. Outstanding Bark

Paperbark Maple (*Acer griseum*)  
Striped Maple\* (*Acer pennsylvanicum* 'White Tigress')  
~~Seven Son Flower (*Heptacoidum micinoides*)~~  
~~Stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*)~~  
Lacebark elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)

#### 5. Wonderful Fruit

Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*)  
American mountain ash\* (*Sorbus americana*) ([www.coldstreamfarm.net](http://www.coldstreamfarm.net))  
Michigan Holly\* (*Ilex verticillata*)  
Thimbleberry\* (*Rubus odoratus*)  
Sargent Crabapple\* (*Malus sargentii*)  
Dwarf Cranberry Bush *Viburnum*\* (*Viburnum opulus* 'Compactum')

## 6. Fantastic Form

Japanese White Pine (*Pinus parviflora*)  
Sargent Cherry (*Prunus sargentii*)  
Scholar Tree (*Sophora japonica*)

## B. The reliable plants: Dependable, steady-eddy types not cast as the "star"

### 1. Trees

Japanese Korean Maple (~~*Acer palmatum*~~ *pseudosieboldianum*)  
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*, *A. laveis*, *A. x Grandiflora*)  
Redbud (~~*Cereis canadensis*~~)  
Florida Dogwood (~~*Cornus florida*~~)  
Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)  
Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*)  
Sourwood (~~*Oxydendrum arboreum*~~)  
Staghorn sumac varieties\* (*Rhus typhina* 'Laciniata,' 'Tiger Eye')  
Tree Lilac\* (*Syringa reticulata*)  
Lantana *Viburnum* (*V. lantana* 'Mohican'\*)

### 2. Shrubs

Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*)  
Beautyberry (~~*Calliocalpa americana*~~, ~~*C. japonica*~~)  
Blue Mist Spirea (~~*Caryopteris x clandonensis*~~)  
Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*)  
Fothergilla (~~*Fothergilla gardenii*~~)  
Witchhazel (~~*Hamamelis x intermedia*~~, *H. vernalis*, *H. virginiana*)  
moved to trees  
Virginia Sweetspire (~~*Itea virginica*~~)  
Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)  
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*, ~~*S. niger*~~)  
Fragrant Viburnum (~~*Viburnum carlesii*~~, *V. x juddii*, *V. x burkwoodii*)  
American cranberrybush (*Viburnum trilobum*\*)

## C. The dwarf plants: Small wonders

### 1. Deciduous and Broad-leaf Evergreen

Crimson Pygmy Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* 'Crimson Pygmy')  
invasive, some U.P. rocky areas

Boxwood (~~*Buxus sempervirens*~~, *B. koreana* cultivars)

Dwarf Purple Weeping Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea Nana')

Little Henry Sweetspire (~~*Itea virginica*~~ 'Little Henry')

Dwarf Artic Willow (*Salix purpurea*)

Dwarf Spirea\* (*Spiraea japonica*, *S. x bumalda*)

### 2. Conifers, listed last but certainly not least

Dwarf Concolor Fir\* (*Abies concolor* 'Compacta')

~~Dwarf Korean Fir (*Abies koreana* 'Hortsmans Silver')~~

Dwarf Falsecypress (~~*Chamaecyparis obtusa*~~ cultivars)

\*Threadleaf falsecypress *C. pisifera*

Blue Star Juniper (*Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star')

Birdsnest Spruce\* (*Picea abies* 'Nidiformis')

Dwarf Dwarf Alberta Spruce\* (*Picea glauca conica* 'Jean's Dilly')

Weeping Red Pine (*Pinus densiflora* 'Pendula')

Tanyosho Pine (*Pinus densiflora* 'Umbraculifera')

Dwarf White Pine\* (*Pinus strobus* 'Nana')

Dwarf Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* cultivars)

Dwarf Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis* cultivars)