

# Native & Adapted Plants for Houston

## LARGE TREES

### American Beech, *Fagus grandifolia*, 80'H X 50'W

A shade tolerant native with smooth gray bark and bright chartreuse colored leaves in early spring. Prefers fertile, well-drained, acid soils. Intolerant of urban stresses.

### Ash, *Fraxinus* spp., 80'H X 40'W

Green Ash, *F. pennsylvanica*, and White Ash, *F. americana*, are natives that deserve more attention. They are long-lived with good, yellow fall color. The commonly planted Arizona Ash, *F. velutina*, is much smaller, a rapid grower, but short-lived, with tangled limbs, and susceptibility to borers. **ARIZONA ASH IS NOT RECOMMENDED.**

### Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum*, 80'H X 40'W

A fast growing, long-lived deciduous tree with distinct conical form. Commonly found in swampy areas, but it does well under dryland conditions and in heavy clay soils.

### Blackgum, *Nyssa sylvatica*, 60'H X 30'W

This tree has beautiful burgundy-red color in early fall. It also has an interesting horizontal branching pattern. It is tolerant of a wide range of conditions but does best in moist, fertile soil.

### Drummond Red Maple, *Acer rubrum* var. *Drummondii* 70'H X 40'W

One of the better fast growing trees with flowers and seed that provide red color in early spring. Other native Texas maples having potential in Houston include Sugar Maple, *A. saccharum*; Chalk Maple, *A. leucoderme*, and Big-tooth Maple, *A. grandidentatum*, from the Uvalde area. Silver Maple, *A. saccharinum* **IS NOT RECOMMENDED.**

### Eastern Black Walnut, *Juglans nigra*, to 75'H X 75'W

The Black Walnut grows in almost any soil type. It grows at a medium growth rate and has an expansive, fragrant canopy atop a straight and proud main trunk. The nut has a very hard-to-crack shell, but it is rich-flavored with nearly twice the protein of English walnuts and is valuable to woodpeckers, foxes and squirrels.

### Elm, *Ulmus* spp., 80'H X 50'W

American Elm, *U. americana*, and Cedar Elm, *U. crassifolia*, are natives well suited to the Houston area. Cedar Elm, especially, should be more widely planted. It is tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions including urban stress and has interesting flaking bark. True Chinese Elm (sometimes called Evergreen Elm), *U. parvifolia*, is also a good tree.

### Linden (Basswood), *Tilia* spp., 70'H x 30'W

Rarely planted in Houston landscapes, but a species native to Texas deserving more attention. Yellow autumn foliage and tolerance of urban stresses has made them a favored street tree in other areas of the country.

### Oak, *Quercus* spp., 80'H X 50'W

Oaks may be divided into two groups; red oaks and white oaks. Acorns mature in two years in the red oak group and the leaves generally have bristles on their tips. Acorns mature in one year in the white oak group and the leaf margins are usually smooth.

**Red Oaks:** Shumard Oak, *Q. shumardii*, Texas Red Oak, *Q. texana*, and Nuttall Oak, *Q. nuttallii*, are three of the best red oaks for this area. Shumard and Texas Red Oak have glossy foliage and are tolerant of mildly alkaline soils. Nuttall Oak is particularly adapted to our heavy clay soils – both have red fall color. Water Oak, *Q. nigra*, and Willow Oak, *Q. phellos*, have a reputation for fast growth, but have been over-planted in the Houston area and are susceptible to iron chlorosis and other problems.

**White Oaks:** Several members of this group deserve more attention. Bur Oak, *Q. macrocarpa*, has heavy spreading limbs, very large acorns, and is tolerant of alkaline soils and urban stress. Swamp Chestnut Oak, *Q. michauxii*, is an excellent large shade tree which tolerates heavy clay soils. White Oak, *Q. Alba*, is less tolerant of urban stresses and prefers well-drained acid soils, but it is a very attractive shade tree. Live Oak, *Q. virginiana*, is our most popular oak because of its broad spreading form, evergreen leaves and tolerance of a wide range of local soil conditions. Lacey Oak, *Q. glaucooides*, is a small oak native to the Hill Country with a spreading canopy and bluish-green foliage that is highly tolerant to heat, drought, alkaline soil and pests that makes a wonderful shade tree for smaller yards. Overcup Oak, *Q. lyrata*, is an attractive adaptable shade tree for any difficult city situation with brilliant reddish or gray brown bark, leathery dark green leaves in summer and rich yellow-brown in fall.

**Oriental Oaks:** A number of Chinese and Japanese Oaks such as *Q. myrsinifoliai* and *Q. acutissima* deserve further testing in our area. Sawtooth Oak, *Q. acutissima*, is a relatively fast-growing oak that produces large acorn crops at an early age. This makes it especially desirable for wildlife plantings. It is also suited to a wide range of soil conditions.

**Mexican Oaks:** A number of oaks growing at higher elevations in Mexico are ideal for the Houston area. Many are small in stature and most are evergreen. Thus far three species have been popular – the Monterrey Oak, *Q. polymorpha*, Loquat-leaved Oak, *Q. rhizophylla*, and Canbyi Oak, *Q. canbyi*.

**Pecan, *Carya illinoensis*, 80'H X 50'W**

This is the state tree of Texas. Recommended varieties for nut production include Desirable, Choctaw, Cheyenne, Caddo, Elliot, Sumner, Cape Fear, and Melrose. Other species of *Carya* are hickories such as Shagbark and Nutmeg Hickory. Though rarely available and difficult to transplant, they deserve more use since they are long-lived, relatively pest free and have good fall color.

**Pine, *Pinus* spp., 80'H X 40'W**

Slash Pine, *P. elliottii*, is unfortunately, one of the most frequently planted pines in the Houston area. It is very susceptible to fusiform rust which disfigures the trunk and branches. Loblolly Pine, *P. taeda*, is native to this area, closely resembles Slash Pine and is less susceptible to fusiform rust. Spruce Pine, *P. glabra*, is smaller than our native pines with low, dense branches and should be used more often.

**Shantung Maple, *Acer truncatum*, 25'H X 20'W**

This is a beautiful maple with a spreading canopy and attractive foliage that turns spectacular red, red-orange in late fall. It tolerates heat and alkaline soils and makes a wonderful shade tree for smaller yards.

**Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, 80'H X 40'W**

This is a narrow-crowned tree with good fall color. It is tolerant of moist soil conditions but prefers fertile, slightly acid soils. There are several Asian species and a variety that does not produce sweetgum balls.

**Sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, 80'H X 40'W**

This tree is fast growing and widely planted. It has attractive bark and large yellow-green leaves. Unfortunately, it is susceptible to serious insect and disease problems which may defoliate the tree several times per season.

**Tuliptree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, 70'H X 25'W**

This species is rarely planted this far west, but once established it does well in the Houston area. It has interesting greenish-yellow, tulip-shaped flowers. This tulip tree prefers rich, moist, well-drained soil.

## SMALL TREES

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**American Holly, *Ilex opaca*, 40'H X 25'W**

This is an evergreen holly with abundant red berries on female trees. It is fairly slow-growing and long-lived. It prefers loamy, acid soils.

**Anaqua, *Ebretia anacua*, 40'H X 35'W**

This tree is drought resistant and relatively disease free with interesting rough leaves. It should be planted more in the Houston area. Prefers well-drained soil.

**Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina* 40'H X 25'W**

A fast growing, deciduous native with distinctive bark and coppery autumn color.

**Camphor, *Cinnamomum camphora*, 40'H X 25'W**

An excellent evergreen tree. Not planted as much as it used to be because of messy black berries and abundant seedlings that sprout easily. It may be frozen back in a hard winter.

**Carolina Buckthorn, *Rhamnus caroliniana*, 15'H X 10'W**

This is a small, native, deciduous tree or large shrub which is easily transplanted. It prefers a moist, fertile, acid soil in full sun to partial shade. In August, it has bright red berries which turn black in September. They are very attractive to birds.

**Cherry Laurel, *Prunus caroliniana*, 25'H X 15'W**

This tree is evergreen and fast growing, but susceptible to peach tree borers. The fruit is popular with birds.

**Chinese Pistache, *Pistacia chinensis*, 40'H X 30'W**

This tree often has good yellow to red fall color. Male trees are preferred because of the copious amount of messy fruit produced by the female. Birds enjoy the fruit produced by the females. Texas Pistachio, *P. texana*, is a small tree with purple fall color that is well adapted to alkaline soils. Both of these trees should be planted more often.

**Dahoon Holly, *Ilex cassine*, 15'H X 10'W**

This is a beautiful, narrow-leaved holly. It needs acid soil and good drainage. Only females produce berries.

**Deciduous Holly (Possumhaw), *Ilex decidua*, 12'H X 6'W**

A truly outstanding small native tree, very low maintenance, which drops its leaves in fall to reveal showy red or orange berries (on female plants) that remain throughout the winter. It attracts songbirds and is heat and drought tolerant.

**Flameleaf Sumac, *Rhus copallina*, 15'H X 10'W**

This small tree has bright red fall coloration and attractive fruit which is eaten by birds. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun.

**Lime Prickly-Ash, *Zanthoxylum fagara*, 15'H X 10'W**

A small, thorny tree with fine-textured, lime-green foliage.

**Mesquite, *Prosopis juliflora*, 30'H X 35'W**

This is an excellent tree with good drought tolerance and a weeping growth habit. It is adapted to hot, dry areas, but with a little water and fertilizer it makes beautiful growth. There is also a Screwbean Mesquite, *P. pubescens* that is rare, but worth searching out because of its unusual seedpods.

**Pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*, 30'H X 20'W**

Pawpaws prefer the moist, deep, rich soils of the bottomlands of the piney woods, gulf prairies and marshes, and post oak savannahs. They are good for single, isolated understory trees. It's leaves are 6 inches wide and 12 inches long and its drooping flowers are 2 inches across and brownish to maroon red. The tropical appearance makes it interesting for the home landscape. Pawpaws are edible in the fall after they have turned almost black and become soft.

**Red Bay, *Persea borbonia*, 30'H X 20'W**

This evergreen tree does best in sandy, acid soils. The leaves are a substitute for true bay.

**River Birch, *Betula nigra*, 40'H X 20'W**

This is one of the few species that is tolerant of wet soils. It has attractive, peeling bark and the foliage casts light shade.

**Sassafras, *Sassafras albidum*, 35'H X 20'W**

This is a tree with good fall color and attractive mitten-shaped leaves. Large specimens are difficult to transplant and they prefer sandy, acid soil. The tree, however, is long-lived and free from most pests. The berries make good wildlife food and sassafras tea can be made from the roots.

**Western Soapberry, *Sapindus drummondii*, 20-30'H X 10-20'W**

This is a medium-size native tree with yellow fall color, exfoliating bark and attractive, translucent berries. The creamy white, late spring to summer flowers are attractive and are followed on female trees by panicles of small translucent yellow-orange drupes.

**Yaupon, *Ilex vomitoria*, 15'H X 10'W**

A small-leaved, evergreen holly, this tree is more tolerant of a broad variety of soil conditions than other hollies. Females have red berries. Weeping and dwarf varieties are available.

## FLOWERING TREES

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**Acacia, *Acacia* spp., 15-25'H X 10-20'W**

Native Acacias such as Huisache, *A. farnesiana*, and Berlandier's Acacia, *A. berlandieri*, are worth preserving in the landscape though they will be difficult to find as nursery trees. They are adapted to alkaline soils. They have fine textured foliage, thorns and white to yellow flowers.

**Anacacho Orchid Tree, *Bauhinia congesta*, 10'H X 10'W**

This native orchid tree has white flowers and good hardiness. *B. forficata* is also hardy with larger white blooms. It sometimes gets freeze damage, but comes back. *B. purpurea* and *B. punctata* have grown with some success. *B. punctata* has striking orange-red flowers. A pink-flowered Mexican species, *B. macranthera*, similar to *B. congesta*, is hardy and has been crossed with *B. congesta*.

**Banana Shrub, *Michelia figo*, 15'H X 10'W**

A small evergreen tree or large shrub similar to Southern Magnolia, but with smaller leaves and small flowers that have a distinct banana fragrance. It prefers loamy, acid soil.

**Buckeye, *Aesculus* spp., 15'H X 10'W**

*A. pavia*, Red Buckeye, is a beautiful, small, red-flowering tree with coppery new growth in the spring. It is tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions and will grow in partial shade. *A. arguta*, Texas Buckeye, has spikes of dense yellow flowers, does well on alkaline soils and is a native of the Edwards Plateau. Mexican Buckeye, *Ungnadia speciosa*, is a small tree with showy pink flower clusters.

**Callery Pear, *Pyrus calleryana*, 30'H X 20'W**

This could be one of our best flowering trees in the south, but it needs more selection for fire blight resistance. Not all Callery Pears bloom well in the south because of insufficient chilling.

**Chaste Tree, *Vitex agnus-castus*, 15'H X 10'W**

This plant is usually a multi-trunk tree or a huge shrub with bright purple flowers and aromatic foliage. A white-flowered form is also available as is a dark purple variety call Montrose Purple. Vitex prefers well-drained soils, but it is actually very easy to grow.

**Crape Myrtle, *Lagerstromia* spp., 20'H X 10'W**

The Common Crape Myrtle, *L. indica*, is a prominent feature in our summer landscapes. Flower colors include white, lavender, near red and various in-between colors. Dwarf *indicas* are also available. Japanese Crape Myrtle, *L. fauriei*, is larger than the *indica*, much more vigorous, has white flowers and a cinnamon-red bark. It is also resistant to powdery mildew. The National Arboretum is crossing the *indica* with *fauriei* to produce larger, amazingly vigorous trees with mildew resistance. The Basham Party Pink Crape Myrtle is a hybrid that was found locally by Mr. Bill Basham. It may reach heights of 30 feet with 40-foot crown spread. Flowers are lavender and the variety has good mildew resistance.

**Dogwood, *Cornus florida*, 25'H X 20'W**

This tree demands a sandy, acid soil and partial shade. Pink-flowered forms and fragrant varieties are available. It also has good fall color and fruit valued by wildlife.

**Farkleberry, *Vaccinium arboreum*, 15'H X 10'W**

This semi-evergreen native tree or shrub has red to burgundy autumn color. Flowers are small, white and bell-shaped. It is adapted to a wide range of conditions and thrives in full sun to semi-shade.

**Fringe Tree, *Chionanthus virginicus*, 25'H X 15'W**

This native of East Texas prefers loamy, acid soil and full sun to partial shade. It is spectacular with lacy-white flowers in spring. There is also a Chinese Fringe Tree, *C. retusus*, that is equally attractive.

**Golden Rain Tree, *Koelreuteria bipinnata*, 30'H X 25'W**

This is one of the most popular small flowering trees because of its fast growth and spectacular yellow flowers plus coral-colored seed capsules. It is a native of China.

**Hawthorn, *Crataegus* spp., 20'H X 20'W**

There are a number of beautiful small flowering trees in this Genus, most notably Parsley Hawthorn, *C. marshallii*, and Mayhaw, *C. opaca*. Attractive peeling bark and good wildlife food are some of the many attributes of the genus. They are also tolerant of most soil conditions and partial shade.

**Jerusalem Thorn, *Parkinsonia aculeata*, 25'H X 20'W**

This species is valued for its bright yellow flowers and foliage that casts very little shade, allowing plants growing underneath plenty of light to flower. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun.

**Mexican Olive, *Cordia boissieri*, 25'H X 25'W**

Mexican Olive is not an olive (*Olea* spp.) at all, though it produces a green, olive-like fruit. Its main attribute is the white, petunia-like flower it produces. This tree is only marginally hardy in Houston, but it makes a spectacular specimen tree in a protected location. Flowering occurs in late spring to early summer, although if it receives enough water it will flower in all seasons.

**Mexican Plum, *Prunus mexicana*, 20'H X 15'W**

This tree is valued for its intensely fragrant white flowers and attractive peeling bark. The small fruit is sometimes used for jams and jellies. Fortunately, pests like the fruit tree borer don't seem to bother this tree. Worms in the fruit, however, are still likely without sprays.

**Necklace Tree, *Sophora affinis*, 20'H X 15'W**

This is a tough, small, flowering tree that – along with its more shrub-like relative, *S. secundiflora*, or Texas Mountain Laurel – should be used more in southern landscapes. It does well on mildly alkaline soils. Seeds are poisonous.

**Redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, 25'H X 20'W**

This is a tree prized for the production of early mauve flowers, but white-flowered forms are available. It may be difficult to transplant, but once established it is fast growing though short-lived.

**Rusty Blackhaw, *Viburnum rufidulum*, 15'H X 10'W**

White flowers in the spring, lustrous green leaves and burgundy-red fall color are major attributes of this small tree.

**Southern Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora*, 70'H X 40'W**

Beautiful glossy foliage and huge white and fragrant flowers make this evergreen one of the most popular trees in the south. Sweetbay Magnolia, *M. virginiana*, is another excellent tree that is usually deciduous with smaller but fragrant flowers. It rarely exceeds 40 feet in height and is very tolerant of difficult conditions (except drought). Oriental magnolias such as *M. soulangiana*, are also deciduous with spectacular flowers in the early spring. These rarely exceed 20 feet in height.

**Southern Waxmyrtle (Bayberry), *Myrica cerifera*, 15'H X 10'W**

This easy to grow evergreen makes a large shrub or small tree. It is tolerant of wet and mildly alkaline soils. Wax from its berries is used for bayberry candles.

**Texas Persimmon, *Diospyros texana*, 30'H X 15'W**

This species main attribute is its slate gray bark. Male trees are preferred because of the messy (but delicious) black fruit on females. Common Persimmon, *D. virginiana*, is also a good tree. Both are tolerant of mildly alkaline, clay soils.

## GROUND COVERS

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### **Asiatic Jasmine, *Trachelospermum asiaticum*, 8-9"H X 18"W**

"Little Leaf Jasmine" as this plant is sometimes called is probably our most commonly planted ground cover. It, too, will survive in shade and sun though it can't be depended on to hold slope as well in the shade as can monkey grass. This is a close relative to the more vining form known as Star Jasmine. This latter form has fragrant white flowers, while the Asiatic Jasmine rarely, if ever, produces flowers.

### **Dwarf Juniper, *Juniperus* spp., 12"-24"H X 4'-10"W**

There are numerous varieties. *J. horizontalis* "Bar Harbor" is a creeping or prostrate juniper (6"-12"H X 10'W) and *J. procumbens* "Nana" is a dwarf Japanese Garden Juniper (12"H X 4'-5'W). They have blue-green evergreen foliage, dense growth, demands sun and well-drained soil. Both are good for rock gardens, but are susceptible to red spider mites and bagworms.

### **English Ivy, *Hedera helix*, 1'H X 2'-20"W**

English Ivy is a fast growing, evergreen dense vine that can be propagated from runners or cuttings. It does best in shade and likes moisture. Although it can be a climber, it is harmless to trees.

### **Festuca, *Festuca ovina*, 6"-10"H X 10"-12"W**

*F. ovina glauca* or Dwarf Blue Fescue, grows as rounded mounds of silver-gray grass. It is evergreen with fast growth and good for rock gardens or planted in a rock ground cover. It demands sun and well-drained soils.

### **Japanese Purple Honeysuckle, *Lonicera japonica chinensis*, 18"-24"H x ? (vine)**

This is a fast-growing dense, rugged evergreen shrub that will also behave as a vine. Honeysuckle blooms in late spring or early summer and has purple foliage in the fall and winter.

### **Liriope, *Liriope muscari*, 12"-15"H X 18"-24"W**

This is spike type foliage on plants that clump. It has lavender-blue spikes of flowers in the summer. There are several varieties, with *L. muscari* "Majestic" having a double bloom and a variegated variety.

### **Monkey, or Mondo Grass, *Ophiopogon japonicus*, 6"-12"H X 8"-12"W**

This is one of the best ground covers for the Houston area. It grows very lush in shade, but will grow in partial shade in this area. It is perhaps the only ground cover that will hold a slope in the shade. Regular weeding is necessary when it is first established to keep it free of weeds. It forms grass-like clumps spread by underground runners to form a dense billowy mass of fine foliage. Tiny violet or blue-violet flowers are sometimes sparsely produced on short spikes among the foliage in early summer. It will grow in any soil and tolerates poor drainage. Somewhat drought-tolerant, it does best with plenty of water.

### **Moss Phlox, *Phlox subulata*, 6"H X 2'W**

Moss Phlox is a low massive evergreen that creeps across the ground providing vivid pink blooms in early spring. It is a fast growing, evergreen that will take sun or partial shade. It is recommended for rock gardens, bed borders and small area.

### **Trailing Lantana, *Lantana sellowiana*, 1'H X 3'-6'W**

This semi-evergreen plant produces lavender blooms all summer. It prefers full sun, tolerates poor soil and is fairly drought tolerant. A white variety is also available.

### **Strawberry Begonia, *Saxifraga* spp., 4"H**

*S. decipiens* prefers to grow in shade or filtered sun. It hugs the ground and spreads by runners. It tends to die back if exposed to too much summer heat and likes moisture. With rose colored foliage in winter, it is good in rock gardens and is recommended for small areas.

### **Vinca, *Vinca major*, 18", *Vinca minor* 6"**

*V. major* is an evergreen perennial vine whose long, trailing, rooting stems interlace to build up mound of growth. With a moderate growth rate, it has flowers that are bright blue to lavender-blue, funnel-shaped, 1-2" across in the spring and summer. It will grow in almost any soil but does best with plenty of organic matter, plenty of water. It likes partial shade during the hot weather, but will tolerate the heat better in shade. *V. minor*, or Dwarf Periwinkle, has the same characteristics, though smaller in stature. It requires more care than *V. major* (more water and feeding), Trim yearly for more even, compact growth.

### **Winter Creeper, *Euonymus fortunei*, 18"-24"H X 3'-4'W**

This is an evergreen, mounding, woody sub-shrub or vine with trailing branches that root when they touch the ground. Slow growing at first, then fast. It grows in most well-drained soils, best with organic matter, but tolerates poor soil. It is heat tolerant, but will grow in sun to full shade and prefers a regular supply of water.

## SHRUBS

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### **Glossy Abelia**, *Abelia x grandiflora*, 4-8'H X 3-6'W

This is a somewhat neglected evergreen shrub for the Houston area. It can also be used as far north as Oklahoma. In addition to fine textured foliage, it produces small, pink flowers with attractive coral sepals.

### **Bamboo**, *Bambusa* spp., 8'H X 10'W

Bamboo is usually thought of as an invasive spreading member of the grass family. In this role, it can make an impenetrable hedge. There are, however, clump form bamboos that are much better behaved. For those spreading types, it may be necessary to place a barrier 24-30" in the ground such as a combination of galvanized roofing and heavy tar paper.

### **Yesterday-Today-and-Tomorrow**, *Brunfelsia pauciflora*, 8-12'H X 4-6'W

This fragrant shrub is somewhat tender and requires a protected location. The flowers open first a deep purple, then change from lavender to white. It will grow in locations varying from partial shade to full sun.

### **Boxwood**, *Buxus sempervirens*, 3-6'H X 3-6'W

Boxwood is a commonly used evergreen shrub, but it does, however, suffer from nematode problems and it requires an organic, acid soil to do well. When plants begin to die out from nematode damage or other problems, it is usually best to substitute with dwarf yaupon.

### **Camellia**, *Camellia japonica*/*C. sasanqua*, 25'H X 15'W

The two major species of this flowering, evergreen shrub – the japonicas and the sasanquas – are both adapted to the Houston area and they both require similar growing conditions. They will grow in partial shade, and under good conditions full sun, but they require an organic, acid soil to do well. This usually means raised beds and the incorporation of up to 5 lbs. of sulfur per 100 sq. ft. prior to planting. Another problem is tea scale. The tea plant is in the camellia family, so it's to be expected that insects and pests of this commercial crop also affect the ornamental species. Dormant oil used in the winter or as a less concentrated summer oil is usually very effective in controlling this pest. Of the two species, the sasanqua tends to make a better landscape shrub since its flower petals shatter easily and don't decay as brown blobs on the bush as with the japonica types.

### **Flowering Senna**, *Cassia coyrmbosa*, 10'H X 5'W

This is a semi-evergreen member of the legume family. Though occasionally damaged during a hard winter, it is otherwise a very tough shrub producing great quantities of bright, yellow blooms in mid-summer. Other species such as *C. splendida*, bloom in the fall, but are slightly less hardy. Even when frozen to the ground, both of these plants will come back.

### **Thorny Elaeagnus**, *Elaeagnus pungens*, 8-15'H X 8'W

This is a common evergreen shrub in Gulf Coast landscapes. It has a silvery grey appearance and is very tough except for its occasional susceptibility to spider mites. Stems are work well as long lasting greenery in floral arrangements.

### **Pineapple guava**, *Feijoa sellowiana*, 18'H X 10'W

This is an excellent gray-green shrub. In addition to its evergreen foliage, it also produces attractive white flowers with bright red stamens. Some years it will even mature fruit which can be used to make jelly. As the shrubs mature, they can make beautiful multi-trunk trees with attractive orange bark. Scale insects occasionally damage this plant, but can usually be controlled with dormant oil.

### **Gardenia (Cape Jasmine)**, *Gardenia jasminoides*, 6'H X 6'W

This evergreen shrub is a symbol of the south. Its attractive white flowers often perfume the summer evening. Unfortunately, it does have several major pests, notably white fly and nematodes. Though not much can be done about nematodes other than to keep the plants healthy and vigorous with applications of iron to the foliage and sulfur to the soil, white fly can be controlled using dormant or summer oil several times a year.

### **Holly**, *Ilex* spp., 4-6'H X 4-6'W (shrubs) and 10-30'H X 8-20'W (trees)

There are so many hollies it is difficult to lump them all in one discussion. However, the major ones include Chinese Holly, American Holly (more of a tree), Dahoon Holly, Deciduous Holly and Yaupon (very similar to the former but evergreen). Most hollies require an organic, acid soil, but the Deciduous Holly and Yaupon are more tolerant. Hollies are also dioecious with separate male and female plants, thus it is usually necessary to have a predominance of females with at least a few males for pollination. The Chinese Hollies are an exception in that they will set berries without a male pollinator.

### **Jasmine**, *Jasminum* species, 6-10'H X 6-8'W

There are several evergreen species of jasmine that can be grown in the Houston area plus a few that, though tender, could be set out in summer for their vigorous growth and fragrant blossoms. The major ones, however, are primrose jasmine, which produces fountain-like growth and Italian jasmine, a more upright shrub. Both have attractive, yellow flowers that, though not as fragrant as the white flowered tropical forms, are still a worthy attribute.

### **Texas Sage**, *Leucophyllum frutescens*, 4-8'H X 4-6'W

This evergreen shrub normally has gray-green leaves, but there are dark green leaf forms available. There is also variability in flower color ranging from the most common lilac and purple to white. The important thing when growing this plant is to be sure that it has full sun, good drainage and a neutral to slightly alkaline soil.

**Leucothoe, *Leucothoe populifolia*, 8-12'H X 4-6'W**

This is an attractive evergreen shrub that must be grown in the shade. In fact, it will burn up if exposed to west sun. Since it is native to the southeast, it is very important that it has a sandy, acid soil or that it be planted in a raised bed.

**Wax-Leaf Ligustrum, *Ligustrum japonicum*, 10-15'H X 8-10'W**

This is our most common evergreen shrub. Though it has provided yeoman service to date, anytime you plant enough of something, eventually insects and diseases will find it. A fungal leaf spot that causes defoliation, much like black spot in roses, can be a severe problem. Cleaning up infected leaves and spraying with a preventive fungicide is recommended.

**Agarita, *Mahonia trifoliolata*, 7'H X 6-8'W**

This is a beautiful grayish-green, evergreen shrub. It produces single, yellow flowers that are very fragrant in the spring followed by red berries that can be used to make a delicious jelly. Like other central and west Texas plants, it requires full sun, good drainage, and does best in a slightly alkaline soil.

**Banana Shrub, *Michelia figo (fuscata)*, 15'H X 8-10'W**

This shrub looks more like a small magnolia tree. The smaller foliage and small, yellow flowers both resemble its magnolia relatives. Like the magnolia, it appreciates an organic, acid soil, but will do rather well in our tight, black soils if planted slightly high and mulched regularly. As you might expect, the flowers have a distinct banana fragrance.

**Southern Wax Myrtle, *Myrica cerifera*, 15-30'H X 10-15'W**

This shrub is a good evergreen substitute for ligustrum. It has finer textured, aromatic foliage. Female plants produce gray berries that can be boiled to extract wax for bayberry candles.

**Heavenly Bamboo, *Nandina domestica*, 8'H X 4'W**

This is one of our toughest evergreen shrubs. A number of dwarf varieties are available. Some of the smallest varieties may not grow well or survive in full sun. Varieties such as Gulf Stream and Harbor Dwarf have proven very good, however. The most important cultural technique when growing this plant is to remove 1/3 of the old canes at the ground level each year to stimulate new growth and prevent leggy growth.

**Oleander, *Nerium oleander*, 20'H X 10-15'W**

This evergreen shrub has long suffered from its reputation as a poisonous plant. It is no doubt quite toxic, but then so are many other species of plants. Where it has full sun and good drainage, it blooms almost constantly through the summer.

**Red Tip Photinia, *Photinia x fraseri*, 20'H X 10-15'W**

This plant has been somewhat over-planted because of its attractive red tipped growth and in recent years, more problems with leaf spot and defoliation have surfaced. Nevertheless, it is still a very striking and attractive shrub that will no doubt continue to be popular.

**Pittosporum, *Pittosporum tobira*, 15'H X 12'W**

This evergreen shrub is another commonly planted feature in the landscape. It too has been subject to a number of diseases, most of which have no practical control. Plants begin to die back a few limbs at a time eventually dying to the ground. Another plant such as Nandina will probably have to be substituted. Dwarf varieties of pittosporum have been especially susceptible to disease and even freeze damage.

**Japanese Yew, *Podocarpus macrophyllus*, 45'H X 5-10'W**

This shrub (eventually a tree) is one of the few plants that can be depended on in the landscape to grow in a narrow fastigate form. *Podocarpus* is relatively tolerant of most soil conditions, but appreciates an acid soil rich in organic matter. Mulching, plus the use of soil sulfur and occasionally foliar sprays of liquid iron will be appreciated.

**Flatwoods Plum, *Prunus umbellata*, 15'H X 15'W**

Flatwoods plum is a lovely large shrub or small tree that occurs singly and does not sucker to form thickets. It grows in acid sands and sandy loams that are well-drained, but does not do well in heavy black clay. It flowers very late and is actually the last of the plums to flower. The fruit are also late in maturing; from August to October. It produces heavy crops of fruit only every 3 or 4 years. It is distinguished from other native plums by its short, solitary nature and smaller flowers and leaves.

**Cherry Laurel, *Prunus caroliniana*, 20-40'H X 10-20'W**

This is a fast-growing evergreen shrub that rapidly becomes a tree. There are compact varieties, however, such as Bright and Tight, that should be considered. Like other members of the *Prunus* family, it is susceptible to borers.

**Fire Thorn, *Pyracantha koidzumii*, 12'H X 4-8'W**

This commonly planted shrub has a number of attributes, notably vigorous growth and the production of large numbers of bright orange or red berries. Unfortunately, it is also susceptible to lace bugs, spider mites and bacterial fireblight. Newer varieties have good resistance to fireblight, but the insect and mite pests may still require occasional sprays.

**Indian Hawthorn, *Raphiolepis indica*, 3-5'H X 3'W**

This evergreen shrub produces pink or white flowers. It has proven itself to be rather tough in recent years with hard winters, but leaf spot disease and other problems, especially where inadequate soil preparation has been done, may limit its value.

**Carolina Buckthorn, *Rhamnus caroliniana*, 30'H X 15'W**

This is a large, deciduous tree most prized for its early production of red fruit and coral fall foliage color. It is also a very vigorous, large shrub that can rapidly provide a summer screen.

**Azalea, *Rhododendron* spp, 6'H X 6'W**

Though we have some beautiful native azaleas in the south, the most common ones found growing in our gardens today are the evergreen *indica* and *kurume* hybrids. Most of the southern azaleas are evergreen and though they can be tall and gangly, they can produce huge quantities of fragrant flowers in the spring. Colors vary from pink to white with an occasional yellow or orange species. The requirements for azalea culture are fairly well known; they do best in raised beds with sandy, organic, acid soil and respond quickly to foliar applications of iron in the spring. The newer Encore varieties provide flowers in both the spring and fall.

**Texas Mountain Laurel, *Sophora secundiflora*, 15' H X 10'W**

This is one of the most beautiful, large evergreen shrubs in Texas. It produces purple wisteria-like blossoms that are intensely fragrant. Since it is another native of central and west Texas, it too requires full sun and a slightly alkaline soil. Unfortunately, it is rather slow growing and large specimens are expensive.

**Cleyera, *Ternstroemia gymnanthera*, 8'H X 5'W**

This evergreen shrub has attractive, burgundy new growth and an overall tropical appearance. It appreciates an acid soil so lots of organic matter and sulfur mixed with the soil prior to planting is a good idea. Foliar sprays of iron are also beneficial.

**Native Viburnums, *Viburnum* spp., 6-12'H X 5-8'W**

There are a number of good native viburnums including arrowwood and possumhaw. The former plant usually has yellow to orange fall color while the possumhaw has coral fall color. Both of these are large shrubs and are best used as large background plants in a native setting. Other viburnums such as sandonkwa and roundleaf viburnum, which are not native, have also been used in the Houston area, but in some years have suffered severe winter damage.

**Xylosma, *Xylosma congestum*, 15'H X 8'W**

This is a little used evergreen shrub valued for its bright green foliage and bronze-colored new growth in the spring. It also does well in most soil types.

## **TURF GRASSES**

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**St. Augustine, *Stenotaphrum secundatum*, Varieties: Raleigh, Seville, Floratam**

St. Augustine is still the best grass overall for the Houston area. The St. Augustine decline virus (SAD) is admittedly a major problem, but the three varieties listed are resistant to the disease. Raleigh and Seville will also grow as well in the shade as will common St. Augustine. If these grasses won't survive in a shaded area, then the homeowner will probably have to use a ground cover. The variety Raleigh has a curious habit of sending out long unattached runners, but it can make an attractive turf.

**Zoysia, *Zoysia species***

This is the grass that is often touted as a miracle grass – disease free, slow-growing, beautiful, etc., etc. Unfortunately, one of these characteristics is almost too true. That is, the slow-growing part. Unless the grass can be established as a solid turf, there will be a constant battle when planting small plugs of Zoysia to keep Bermuda grass from over-running it. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to selectively remove the Bermuda. Zoysia also has a few other failings – it is certainly not disease free. In particular, it gets a rust disease that though not fatal is very unattractive – particularly in the fall. Zoysia can also be very tough to mow in the summer when it is dry and under stress. The two basic types of Zoysia are Emerald, which a very fine-textured but wiry grass, and Meyer or hybrids of Meyer and other species. The Meyer Zoysia is a medium textured grass – the one most commonly offered in ads. Zoysia is also very quick to turn brown with the first frost in the fall. It is probably best used in small areas – especially the Emerald variety – where it can be established as a solid turf.

**Bermudagrass, *Cynodon dactylon***

This introduced species is so aggressive that even if you don't plant it, you will probably find some of it in your yard. The hybrid forms of Bermuda can make perhaps the most beautiful turf there is while seedling, or common, Bermuda grass often produces great quantities of unsightly seed heads. The most important requirement for healthy Bermuda grass is full sun and lots of fertilizer. It is the least shade tolerant of all southern grasses and though it may persist even in deep shade, it will not make a satisfactory turf. Tifway and Tifgreen are the two most common hybrids used for home lawns while varieties such as Tifdwarf are used exclusively for golf course greens. Texturf is a variety adapted for sports fields.