



Knowing Your Trees Can Help Keep the Canopy Healthy

Diversity Is Key

Pests and diseases have impacted our local forests. Diversity is the key to maintaining a healthy canopy. Monocultures (forests with a single type of tree) are particularly susceptible to pest and disease outbreaks that can spread faster and be difficult to manage. With a diverse tree canopy, the loss of a few trees to a pest like emerald ash borer is much more manageable than treating an entire canopy of a single species, or losing them altogether.



Multiple Benefits:

Trees are much more than something that comes with a house. Trees provide shade, which can reduce energy costs in the summer by about 30 percent if planted in the correct spot. A well-placed evergreen screen can also protect against winter winds, which will save on heating costs. Trees also can provide food for birds, insects, and mammals. Oak trees support nearly 500 species of birds, insects, mammals, and plant-specific fungi and bacteria. Choosing a species that will fulfill multiple goals will benefit the home and homeowner.





Northern red oak (Quercus rubra)



Redbud (Cercis canadensis)

Tree ID: Leaves, Buds, Bark, Twigs, and Shape

While leaves are the most common thing folks look for, there are many other characteristics that can help identify trees. In winter, bud color and shape will be important. Bark can be shaggy, smooth, blocky and could be dark or light. Twigs can be zig-zag like a redbud, fish-ribbed like an elm, or stout like a black walnut. Overall shape is also a great way to identify some trees from a distance. Pin oaks have a bell shape, willow oaks have a lollipop shape, and American elms have a vase shape. All these indicators can help identify a tree.



Birch bark

Right Tree , Right Place:

When selecting trees to plant, it's important to consider characteristics like tree height, spread of roots, whether the soil is compacted, water demand, how it drains, and how much sunlight it will receive.



Maple leaf

Before You Plant:

1. Check the soils for compaction and drainage
2. Evaluate the number of hours of sunlight the space receives each day
3. Locate the nearest water source
4. Locate power lines and underground utilities
5. Identify homeowner objectives

“Tips for Green Leaders in Frederick County” is a publication of the Frederick County Office of Sustainability and Environmental Resources, Office of the County Executive. For more information on this topic and about our programs, visit www.frederickcountymd/sustainability, email us at sustainability@frederickcountymd.gov, or call at 301.600.1416. Sustainable Frederick County is on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

