

What Tree Should I Plant?  
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Did the scorching temperatures of summer leave your landscape begging for an update? If so, plant now. Plant trees when they are dormant to give them the best opportunity to adapt to their environment while not disturbing their seasonal process of storing food and energy for the following year.

How does one decide what to plant and where? There are three main considerations: tree characteristics, site conditions, and other plant considerations. Selecting a tree with these criteria in mind will ensure you choose well and help you achieve your landscape vision.

One of the most important things to consider is maximum size at maturity. It can be difficult to envision this when planting a five or 15-gallon tree, but planting a tree with a mature height of 50 feet and canopy spread of 30 feet is not the right choice for a planting space of just 20 feet. Crown shape, foliage type, growth rate, leaf arrangement, leaf shape, leaf color, flowers, flower color, flower type, flowering time, fruit, fruiting time, litter type, bark, and whether it's a California native round out tree considerations.

Site conditions include available planting area, water use, Sunset Zones, [www.sunset.com/garden/climate-zones/sunset-climate-zones-california-nevada](http://www.sunset.com/garden/climate-zones/sunset-climate-zones-california-nevada), USDA Hardiness Zones [www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov](http://www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov), sun exposure, soil texture, soil pH, deer resistance, utility precautions, fire resistance, and salt spray. Most plants prefer a neutral soil pH range of 5.5 to 8. A soil test will find if your soil needs amending to alter the texture, pH, or nutrients. Soil test kits are available at nurseries, online, or you can send your soil to a soil testing laboratory. You can find a list of El Dorado County soil laboratories at the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources website. [https://ucanr.edu/sites/MG\\_of\\_CS/files/376967.pdf](https://ucanr.edu/sites/MG_of_CS/files/376967.pdf)

Other plant considerations include branch strength, root-damage potential, potential health issues, biogenic emissions, wildlife interactions, disease and pest susceptibility, disease and pest resistance, and whether it is powerline friendly. Do not plant a tree with a high potential for root damage next to a foundation or sidewalk.

There are tools that aid tree selection. The SelecTree database ([SelecTree: A Tree Selection Guide \(calpoly.edu\)](http://calpoly.edu)) from the Urban Forest Ecosystem Institute (UFEI) at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo is one. There are approximately 1,500 species in this database with pictures. A second database is the UC Davis Arboretum ([Arboretum All-Stars | UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden](http://ucdavis.edu)). This database has 100 plants proven to grow well in El Dorado County. Both databases allow a user to search based on the above criteria. A word of advice when using any database is to limit the number of filters you add. Sometimes using too many filters can result in a “no plant found” result. This does not mean there is not a plant that fits all the chosen filters, it means the database does not have one.

Now that you know the considerations for choosing trees and databases to aid in your selection process, happy planting.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698), and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education/Classes/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/)

Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open December – February on the first Saturday of the month. We will offer tours, answer questions or you can just enjoy the garden. Please check our website for further information about the Sherwood Demonstration Garden at: [https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Demonstration\\_Garden/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/) On December 3, we will offer a tour at 9 a.m. and open garden from 9 a.m.- noon. The Community Observatory will be offering safe solar viewing as well.

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu) or leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).