

# TREES

## For Small Gardens

Deciduous trees can provide height, structure, and accent to an urban garden, and many add year-round interest by means of their leaf and bark coloring. Suggestions are provided for some reliable varieties for smaller gardens. While some may seem tall at maturity, they may grow slowly and be suitable for a small garden for many years.

Unless otherwise indicated, the trees identified will thrive in full sun and many will tolerate light shade.

## FLOWERING TREES

### Chinese or Korean Dogwood (*Cornus kousa*)

This is a reliable, disease-free performer with year-round interest. It is vase-shaped in youth then becomes rounded with horizontal branching as it ages. It blooms in late May/early June, with very small long-lasting yellow/green flowers on four white bracts. It performs best in partial sun and may need irrigation in a dry period. Growth is slow to H: 7–10 m (23–32 ft); W: 5–7 m (16–23 ft).

### Magnolia

The Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia soulangeana*) and Star Magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*) are both deciduous and produce flowers from bare branches in spring.

The Saucer Magnolia is quite slow-growing and will grow to H: 8 m (26 ft) depending on cultivar. 'Coates' is highly recommended as are 'Lennei Alba' and 'Rustica Rubra'. 'Royal Star' is one of the most popular star magnolias.

For the very small garden, try the Little Girl hybrids which are slow-growing and bloom later than the Saucer and Star magnolias. Mature H: no more than 6 m (20 ft).

### Japanese Stewartia (*Stewartia pseudocamellia*)

This is a medium height, slow-growing tree suitable for a medium-sized garden. It flowers from June to August with a single camellia-type bloom of considerable beauty. It has spectacular yellow/orange/red fall foliage, and its orange/gray/gray patches on the bark give winter interest. It may be quite difficult to establish, and is sensitive to drought, but is well worth the effort. It will tolerate part shade. H: 6–9 m (20–30 ft).

### Japanese Snowbell Tree (*Styrax japonicus*)

An excellent and graceful tree that blooms at the end of May/early June, with bell-shaped white blooms hanging under the foliage. The foliage is attractive throughout the season. There are a number of cultivars such as 'Pink Chimes', 'Rosea' which is also pink, and "Emerald Pagoda". All are reliable, and can be used as container specimens, especially in their earlier years. They tolerate full sun or part shade. At maturity, H: 7–8 m (25 ft).



Front cover:  
*Acer palmatum*  
'Bloodgood'  
PHOTO:  
Vic Bentley

### Ornamental cherries and plums (*Prunus* spp.)

#### Coastal BC

Ornamental plums and ornamental cherries are from the same genus. As there have been disease problems with plums in recent years, look for disease-resistant varieties such as *Prunus cerasifera* 'Atropurpurea' or the Canada Plum (*Prunus nigra*).

There are many varieties of ornamental cherry (*Prunus*) trees, and a key factor in the choice may be the time of blooming. Some recommended cultivars for coastal BC are listed here, by bloom season.



*Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum' will brighten a shady corner with its light green foliage. PHOTO: Barry Roberts

#### Early season

Whitcomb Higan Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Whitcombii'), an upright, spreading tree, horizontally branched with single, dark pink blossoms in small clusters. H: 6–8 m (20–25 ft); W: 9 m (30 ft).

Accolade Cherry (*Prunus* 'Accolade'), an open, spreading tree with masses of pink, semi-double rose pink flowers in large drooping clusters. H/W: 6 m (20 ft).

#### Mid-season

Yoshino 'Akebono' (*Prunus x yedoensis* 'Akebono') is one of the most reliable varieties for coastal BC. It produces beautiful pink blossoms on bare arching branches that form an umbrella shape after a few years' growth. Highly disease resistant. H: 9 m (30 ft).

Weeping Higan Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Pendula'), also known as the Weeping Rosebud cherry, has a hanging habit as the name implies. It has small single pink flowers on bare branches. There is also a double variety. Slow growing to H: 6–10 m (20–32 ft); W: 5–8 m (16–26 ft).

#### Late season

Kanzan (*Prunus serrulata* 'Kanzan'), the most commonly planted cherry in coastal BC, has double purple-pink flowers. The young leaves tend to be bronze before turning dark green. If infected with silver-leaf virus, trees must be removed and burned, which should be considered before purchasing this tree. H: 5–7 m (16–23 ft) at maturity; W: greater than height.

Shogetsu (*Prunus serrulata* 'Shogetsu'), one of the latest bloomers in coastal BC, is umbrella shaped, often with a flattened top, with shell-pink buds opening to large semi-double white or lightly pink flowers. It tends to be longer blooming than most. At maturity, H/W: 8 m (26 ft).

Where space is limited, consideration may be given to the Columnar Japanese Cherry (*Prunus* 'Amanogawa'). This species has straight multiple branches in a formal upright habit with a minimal spread. It is suitable for a large container. H: 6 m (20 ft); W: 2–3 m (6–10 ft).

#### Other areas of BC

Ornamental Japanese flowering cherries are often symptomless carriers of the Little Cherry Virus. Gardeners in Interior BC should be aware that the **Little Cherry Control Regulation** prohibits the sale or growth of flowering cherries in the Okanagan, Similkameen and Creston valleys. Other hardy flowering trees are suggested below.

#### Hawthorn

Hawthorn (*Crataegus oxyacantha*), also known as May Tree, can be pruned as a shrub or grown as a tree. White flowers in late spring attract bees. Tolerates most soil and light conditions. H/W: 6 m (20 ft).

#### Tamarisk

The *Tamarix* species have deep pink flowers that form an attractive cloud around the tree, dark stems and green foliage. Medium growth rate. H/W: 3.5 m (12 ft).

#### Yellow horse chestnut

*Aesculus neglecta* is a native N. American small tree with foliage that is copper in spring, dark green in the summer and orange and yellow in autumn. Flowers are creamy-yellow. H/W: 3 m (10 ft).

## MAPLES

There is a maple (*Acer*) for almost every location, and they form the backbone of many gardens. Many are excellent for the small garden, especially as they can generally tolerate light shade.

Japanese Maple (*A. palmatum*) is popular and has hundreds of cultivars chosen for size, shape, leaf type and color. Laceleaf Japanese maples (*A. palmatum* var. *dissectum*) have feathery green foliage and a drooping habit, and can give excellent texture to a garden. 'Koto-no-ito' has light green thread-like leaves, and 'Ozakazuki' is a brown-leaved variety turning to spectacular reds in the fall. H: no more than 6–10 m (20–32 ft).

*Acer japonicum* is cultivated much less than *A. palmatum*, but cultivars such as the Grape Leaf Maple (*A. japonicum* 'Vitifolium') or the Fern Leaf Maple (*A. japonicum* 'Aconitifolium') are used in BC. H: 3 m (10 ft).

Worthy of special mention because of its exceptional year-round interest, Coral Bark Maple (*A. palmatum* 'Sango kaku') is a relatively small tree with light pink/green leaves in the summer, turning to various shades of gold in the fall. Its coral bark, especially if floodlit, is a talking point in any garden in the winter. It prefers part shade. H: 5 m (16 ft).

Paperbark Maple (*A. griseum*) is unusual because of its continuously peeling bark. It is larger and requires more room than the Coral Bark Maple, but is slow growing. In a very dry summer, it may also require deep watering. H: 8–10 m (26–32 ft).



*Stewartia pseudocamellia* PHOTO: Jenny Newman

## TREES WITH BARK OR BERRY INTEREST

#### Birch (*Betula*)

Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*) is an eye-catching tree, with beautiful white/silver bark on its trunk and branches year round. It can grow in full sun or dappled shade, but is best grown as a specimen tree in sun. Choose the location carefully, as it can grow tall. H: 10+ m (32 ft) after 20–25 years.

Where space is more limited, Young's weeping birch (*Betula pendula* 'Youngii') is a good choice. As well as its silver bark, a winter feature is 10 cm (3 in) catkins hanging from the slender branches. H: 2–3 m (6–10 ft).

#### Cornelian cherry (*Cornus mas*)

A small deciduous tree with small yellow flowers in rounded clusters on bare branches in March/April, followed by bright red fruit in mid summer. The bark has some winter interest. Look for 'Elegant', 'Pioneer' or 'Redstone'. 'Nana' is a dwarf variety. All are highly resistant to pests and diseases. H: 5–6 m (15–20 ft) or slightly greater.

#### Mountain ash or rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

Technically not an ash, but has some of the same leaf characteristics. It is vigorous and hardy, can stand cold temperatures and relatively poor light and peaty soils. Often found in higher altitudes. The many bright orange/red berries in late summer attract birds. H: 6 m (20 ft).



Magnolia grandiflora PHOTO: Vic Bentley

## TREES FOR THE BACKDROP

### Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

The staghorn sumac is a weedy type of tree that grows well at the back of a garden or in areas where the soil may be poor or very dry. The “stags horns” are red and the leaves turn to a very showy yellow/orange/red in the fall. Grows quickly to H: 5–8 m (16–26 ft), and spreads by colonizing.

### Vine maple (*Acer cirinatum*)

Generally grown below taller trees, and is excellent in a mixed backdrop, especially because of its fall colors. It thrives in wet sites along stream or river banks, and can tolerate both shade and open areas. Generally H: 5–8 m (16–26 ft), but often bends to form an arch.

## TREES FOR THE SPECIAL LOCATION

### Honey locust (*Gleditsia*)

For a larger garden, the Honey Locust is almost unbeatable in a special open spot. It has pea-type flowers and attractive leaves appearing later in the season, and turning yellow in the fall. The most popular variety in BC (*Gleditsia triacanthos* ‘Sunburst’) also has golden foliage in spring. Branches can be brittle. H: 8 m (26 ft).

### Katsura (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*)

The Katsura has distinctive, heart-shaped leaves, with umbrella-shaped veins. Leaves change from an initial yellow/copper to light green in summer to yellow in the fall. It is a beautiful, disease-resistant addition to a garden, growing relatively slowly to H: 12 m (40 ft).

### Silk tree or Mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*)

Named for its feathery leaves and pink flowers which look like silky threads, this tree is a late bloomer, with the flowers then remaining the entire season. It should be planted as a specimen tree, where it will provide dappled shade. The greenish-gray bark also provides winter interest. Attract insects, bees and hummingbirds. H: 5–9 m (16–30 ft).

### Southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*)

This is an exotic-looking species tree. Evergreen, with large leaves that are shiny green on the upper side and brown on the underside. It blooms in late spring or early summer. ‘Little Gem’ is best for the small garden with H: about 6 m (20 ft).

### ‘Tiger Eyes’ sumac

For a truly interesting small tree, try the recently introduced ‘Tiger Eyes’ sumac (*Rhus typhina* ‘Tiger Eyes’). Its feathery leaves change through the season from green to yellow to orange/scarlet. It is equally at home in the garden or in a large container. H: 2.5 m (8 ft).

### Ginkgo (*Ginkgo biloba*)

The oldest of trees, it is highly disease and pollution resistant. It has unique fan-shaped leaves that turn yellow in the fall. Try the ‘Autumn Gold’ cultivar. Slow growing to a mature H: 12–15 m (40–50 ft).

## REFERENCES

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# Master Gardeners

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- presents gardening programmes in schools, hospitals and seniors’ homes
- works with community groups on various “greening” projects.

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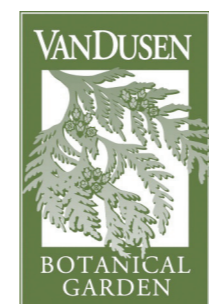
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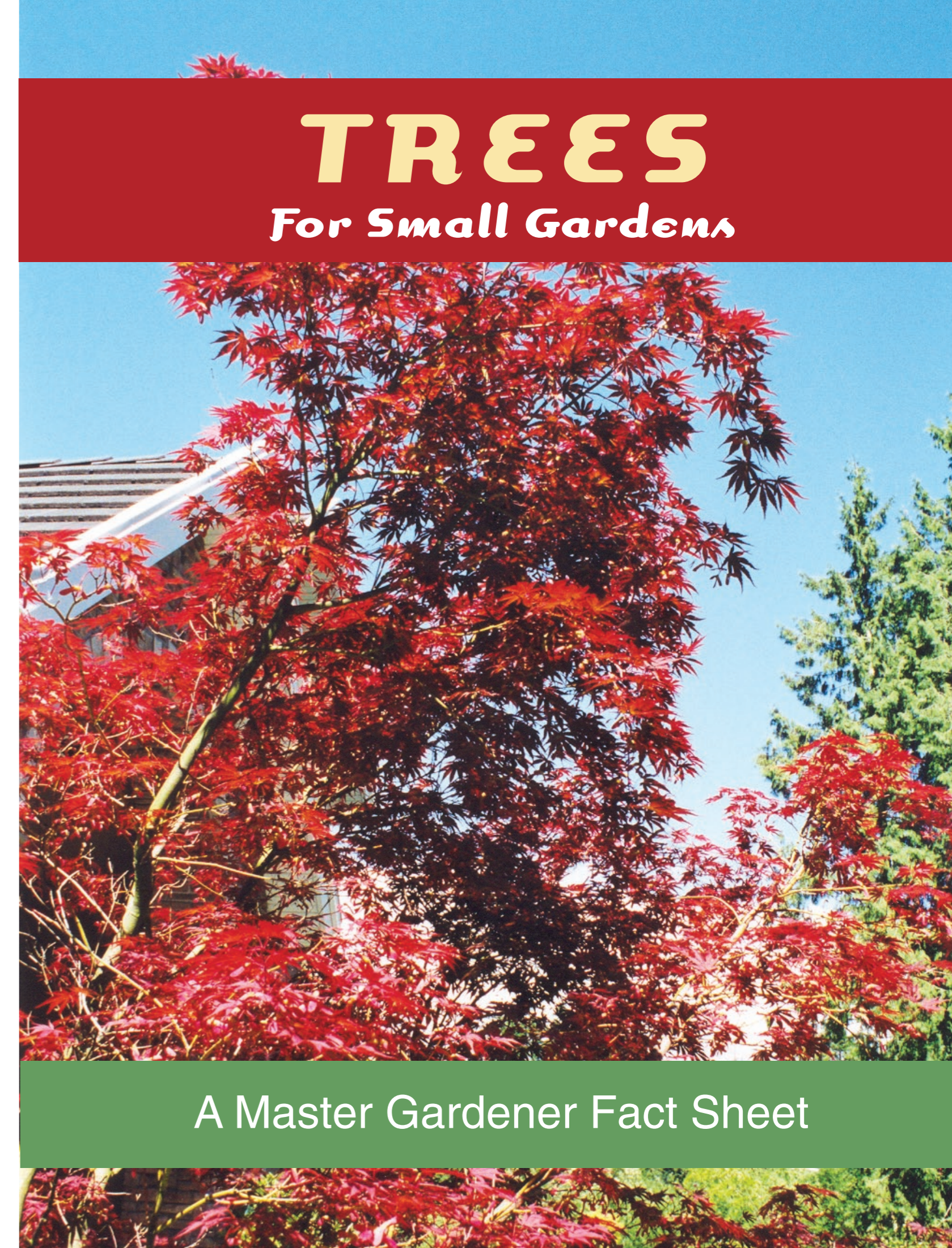
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