Tree Descriptions

Blue Beech (Carpinus caroliniana)
15-20 ft. h  10-15 ft. w

One of the best mid-sized trees with smooth, gray, fluted bark. The flowers are in the form of catkins and are not highly visible. The fruit hangs in 4-6 inch clusters. Fall color can be red, yellow and orange. This tree is highly adaptable to different soils and pH levels in the soil. In full sun, it will grow in a formal, upright character, but if grown in shade it will have a more loose, informal shape. Many people have used this tree as a screen.

Hackberry (Celtis occidentalis)
50-60 ft. h  40-50 ft. w

The branching is unruly and numerous in its youth with many leaders. Hackberry’s growth rate is very fast in its youth and slow as it matures. In 10 years it will grow 20-25 ft. It is very adaptable tree, growing in wet and dry soil in full sun. It does well as a street tree. The birds enjoy the purplish-black fruit that is edible.

Redbud (Cercis canadensis)
15 ft. h  10 ft. w

Redbuds are outstanding understory trees that profusely, produces a rose-purple flower in the spring on bare branches. The tree forms a flattened bean-like pod that turns brown in the summer and that may remain through the winter. The tree prefers drier soil. In the fall, the heart-shaped eaves turn a yellowish to a yellow-brown.
Pagoda Dogwood (Cornus alternifolia)
15 ft. h  10-15 ft. w
The Pagoda likes a few hours of sun in the morning, with protection from the western sun exposure and moist soil. The tree has horizontal branching and white flowers in the spring. In the fall, the Pagoda has blue-black fruit and the leaves have a maroon-red color. This is a good understory tree.

Kentucky Coffee Tree (Gynocladus dioicus)
40-60 ft. h  30-50 ft. w
While it may look like the ugly duckling of trees when it is small, the Kentucky Coffee Tree turns into a beautiful swan as it matures. It has the largest bipinnate leaves in northern Illinois, and these large leaves need large branches for support. A 2-inch caliper tree has only 1 to 3 branches. Females produce 3-6 inch seed pods that stay on all winter providing great winter interest. The plants are dioecious (separate male and female trees) so they may not flower.

Sycamore (Platanus occidentalis)
75 ft. h  50 ft. w
This is one of the fastest growing trees averaging 3-4 ft. per year. It prefers medium to wet soil. The exfoliating bark of the Sycamore appears mottled and it has non-descript flowers that appear in April. The male flowers are yellow and the female flowers are red and develop into fruity balls that gradually disintegrate into downy tufts that disperse into the wind.
White Oak (Quercus alba)
50-80 ft. h  50-80 ft. w

White Oak is mildly tolerant of shade and it grows in sand and clay, but not wet sites. This is a slower growing oak and it is the only member of the white oak group whose leaves turn russet in the fall.

Swamp White Oak (Quercus bicolor)
50-80 ft. h  50-80 ft. w

Swamp White Oak is a good all around deciduous tree that tolerates wet soil and dry conditions. The top of the leaves are a shiny green while the underside is a silvery, white. In the fall, the turn yellow to brown. This oak prefers full sun.

Bur Oak (Quercus macrocarpa)
50-80 ft. h  50-80 ft. w

The Bur Oak is a very adaptable tree. It is tolerant of heavy clay soil, with a high pH level and in open areas. It needs full sun. Its growth rate is slow to moderate and is very asymmetrical in youth, but it becomes more symmetrical as it matures. The Bur Oak’s bark is deeply furrowed and dark, brown and it had massive branches.
Chinquapin Oak (Quercus muehlenbergii)
50-80 ft. h  50-60 ft. w
Chinquapin has done well as a street tree because of its tolerance of high pH soils and drought resistance. It is considered a shade tree and ornamental tree. The acorns are not messy on this tree and are highly sought after by wildlife. Fall color varies from orangish-brown to brown. Its growth rate is slow to medium.

Red Oak (Quercus rubra)
50-80 ft. h  40-80 ft. w
This is one of the most shade tolerant oaks. It just needs a few hours of sun a day. The fall color is an outstanding red and it is said to be one of the fastest growing oaks.

Bald Cypress (Taxodium distichum)
40-50 ft. h  20-30 ft. w
Bald Cypress is one of only a few deciduous conifers growing in this part of the country. It tolerates water covering its roots for weeks or months. The exfoliating bark is brown-orange and the green needles are soft and turn russet orange in the fall.
Shrub Descriptions

Buttonbush (Cephalanthus occidentalis)
8-12 ft. h  8-12 ft. w

The Buttonbush is a shrub that grew in marshes and floodplains so it can tolerate wet soil conditions. It's leaves are a glossy green, but they are not very showy in the fall. In late July and early August it produces a white pincushion-like flower that attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and other insect pollinators. The flower heads mature into hard spherical ball-like fruits consisting of multiple tiny two-seeded nutlets.

Smooth Hydrangea (Hydrangea arboescens)
3-5 ft. h  3-5 ft. w

This is one of the best shade tolerant plants. In June and July, the white corymbs blooms covers the shrub. Typically this plant is found in open woods, shaded wetlands and along woodland streams.

Oak-leaf Hydrangea (Hydrangea quercifolia)
6 ft. h  4 ft. w

This broad-rounded, suckering, mutt-stem deciduous shrub likes full sun to part-shade. It produces beautiful, pyramidal, panicles of white flowers in late June and July. It prefers moist soil and it should be in a sheltered area buffered from winter winds. In the fall, the oak-like leaves turn red-orange. The exfoliating bark on the older branches provides winter interest.
Chokeberry (Prunus virginiana)
8-15 ft. h  8-10 ft. w

Flowers bloom in late April to early May and form into pea-sized berries in August that are dark purplish/black. This plant prefers full sun, but it tolerates shade too. It can be grown in sand or clay and it is tolerant of wet or dry soil. Its leaves turn a nice orange-red in early fall.