

• celebrate the Garden Club of America's Centennial in 2013, The Garden Club of Houston has created a list of *Great Small Trees for Houston*.

Our city sits at the convergence of several major ecosystems, and our climate encourages the healthy growth of an extraordinary variety of plants, especially trees. Over the years, the Garden Club of Houston has researched an untold number of trees. Our recommended trees have been sold at our popular Bulb & Plant Mart, and more importantly, have been grown in members' gardens. Our collective experience is reflected in *Great Small Trees for Houston*. It is our hope that this list will be useful not only to public entities who build parks and trails, but also to developers, civic associations, growers, and any citizens interested in making our public spaces and private gardens more economical, sustainable, and beautiful.

The *Great Small Trees* were selected based on three criteria:

- native to our area and likely to thrive with little maintenance;
- exceptional beauty and the widest possible range of seasonal interest; and
- habitat benefits, particularly for birds.

We chose to focus on the small trees that are often missing from our public spaces and to emphasize trees that are typically commercially available. To be practical in a public space or a private garden, a tree must require little maintenance and thus be inexpensive over the longer term. Houston, a bird watcher's paradise, is on a major flyway, so plantings must provide shelter and food for birds if we are to sustain this key community characteristic. The best way to achieve all these goals is to use native or adaptive plants found in our general region.

Most importantly, these trees are beautiful. They can bring extraordinary variety and charm to our landscapes.

The *Great Small Trees* offer a remarkable mix of ornamental interest from early spring through fall.

# Selection of Small Trees

Anacahuita — Texas Wild Olive *Cordia boissieri* American Holly

*llex opaca* Chalk Maple *Acer leucoderme* Eastern Redbud

*Cercis canadensis* Ironwood

*Carpinus caroliniana* Mexican Plum

Prunus mexicana Native Fringe Tree Chionanthus virginicus Parsley Hawthorn Crataegus marshallii

Possum-Haw *Ilex deciduas* 

Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum *Viburnum rufidulum* Southern Wax Myrtle

*Myrica cerifera* Sweet Bay Magnolia

Magnolia virginiana Two-wing Silver Bell Halesia diptera

, Yaupon Holly *Ilex vomitoria* 

Light: full sun to partial shade Soil: sands, loams, and clays

Anacahuita – Texas Wild Olive Cordia boissieri established **Bayou Site:** top bank **Growth Habit:** persistent to evergreen, fast, sensitive to cold — will freeze to roots below 20 degrees, plant in protected area **Flower:** showy 2 inch white flowers with yellow throat, will flower all year long with enough water

Moisture: well drained, drought tolerant once

Fruit: drupes, white turning to purple Size: 12 to 24 ft. tall, 25 ft. wide Form: rounded crown with short trunk Special Interest: fruit enjoyed by birds and small mammals



Light: full sun to partial shade Soil: sands, loam, acid soils Moisture: well drained Bayou Site: top bank Growth Habit: evergreen, slow growing, long lived

Flower: inconspicuous Fruit: red berries on female, need male tree nearby for pollination

Size: 15 to 35 ft., occasionally to 60 ft.

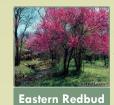
Form: triangular crown that broadens with age

**Special Interest:** good screening plant, berries enjoyed by many birds and small mammals, larval host plant for butterfly, excellent nesting tree for birds



Chalk Maple Acer leucoderme Light: partial sun Moisture: dry, will need supplemental water in severe drought Soil: rich loam, needs good drainage Bayou Site: upper slope Growth Habit: deciduous, fast, rounded crown, whitish bark Flower: small in April

Fruit: wings ¾ inches long Size: 12 to 20 ft.



Cercis canadensis

Light: sun to part shade Soil: sands, loams and clay Moisture: well drained, moderate moisture, will need supplemental water during severe drought Bayou site: top bank Growth Habit: deciduous, fast growth Flower: March — pink flowers about ½ inch long, in

clusters along branches before leaves appear

Fruit: seed pods Size: 10 to 20 ft.

Form: small tree, spreading, flat or slightly rounded crown, usually single trunk Special Interest: one of our prettiest flowering trees; leaves are source of food for butterfly larvae; flowers are nectar source for butterflies, moths, and bees; seeds are eaten by birds

Light: sun to partial shade



Ironwood Carpinus caroliniana Soil: loam, clay Moisture: well drained Bayou Site: upper slope, top bank Growth Habit: deciduous, slow growing Flower: male and female flowers form in fall, persist through winter, and open in spring Fruit: nutlets in 2 inch clusters Size: 15 – 30 ft., 20-25 ft. wide Form: open crown with drooping thin branches

**Special Interest:** yellow, orange, and red fall color; heartwood is very strong, once used by Indians for bows; flowers and seeds enjoyed by many birds; also called American Hornbeam or Musclewood due to smooth, sinewy trunk,



Prunus mexicana

Light: full sun to partial shade Soil: sandy, loam, clay Moisture: dry to moist, well drained, drought tolerant, tough tree Bayou Site: slopes or top bank

**Growth Habit:** deciduous, moderate to fast growth in right location

Flower: fragrant, showy white flowers before leaves

appear

Fruit: small round fruit, green turns purple

Size: 15 to 30 ft. tall to 25 ft. wide

Form: single trunk, blue-gray bark with dark horizontal striations, broad crown Special Interest: fruit enjoyed by birds and mammals; larval host for Tiger Swallowtail butterfly and Cecropia moth larvae; fragrant flowers attract bees and butterflies



Fringe Tree Chionanthus virginicus Light: sun to partial shade, prefers dappled shade Moisture: prefers moist site but is adaptable, will need supplemental water during severe drought Soil: moist, fertile, acid soil, sandy loam Bayou site: along upper slope or top bank Growth Habit: deciduous Flower: March - fragrant, 5-10 inch white panicles, drooping in clusters Fruit: August - October on female plants, dark blue to purple drupes Size: 15 to 20 ft. Form: slender trunk or often multi-trunked, with

irregular, rounded crown
Special Interest: fruit loved by birds; also known as Grancy Gray Beard



Parsley Hawthorne Crataegus marshallii

sun Soil : sands, loam, clays Moisture: well drained but will tolerate seasonal poor drainage, drought tolerant once established Bayou Site: lower slope, or top bank Growth Habit: slow but long lived, deciduous Flower: 1 inch white flowers, showy Fruit: small red haws throughout winter, plant more than one tree for better fruiting

Size: 15 to 30 ft. tall, 25 ft. wide

Form: wide-spreading, slender branches and broad, irregular, open crown with parsley like leaves, some branches have thorns Special Interest: birds enjoy the fruit in the winter; attracts butterflies; the thorny branches help protect nesting birds from predators.



Possum Haw Ilex deciduas

Light: shade, will fruit best in partial shade to sun Soil: adaptable, sands, loams and clays Moisture: well drained, seasonal poor drainage tolerated, drought tolerant Bayou Site: top bank or slopes Growth Habit: moderate, deciduous Flower: small white flowers in spring Fruit: bright red-orange drupes on female plants that persists into the winter, females need a male pollinator for good fruit set

#### Size: 8 to 20 ft.

Form: loose; rounded, many horizontal and ascending branches Special Interest: abundant red berries on bare branches in winter are a show stopper; fruits are eaten by birds and small mammals; good nest tree



Rusty Blackhaw Viburnum Viburnum

Light: partial shade to full sun Soil: sand, loam and clay, well drained Moisture: drought tolerant Bayou Site: upper slope of top bank Growth Habit: deciduous, slow growing Flower: white flower clusters 4 inches wide in spring Fruit: blue/black drupes 1/2 inch long in fall Size: 10 to 30 ft. tall depending on environment, can get to 35 ft. wide

Form: shrub for a long time, becomes a tree, single trunk with broad crown

Special Interest: fruit loved by many birds and mammals; flowers attract butterflies and bees; leaves eaten by butterfly larvae; fall color; glossy leathery leaves. This can be difficult to start, but it is a favorite of many of our experts. Good drainage is key.



Southern Wax Myrtle Myrica cerifera

Light: full sun to partial shade Soil: loam, clay, adaptable Moisture: will tolerate poor drainage, drought tolerant once established Bayou Site: slopes, top bank Growth Habit: evergreen, fast growing Flower: inconspicuous Fruit: pale bluish berries Size: 10 to 20 ft. tall, 10 to 15 ft. wide Form: large shrub or small multi-trunked tree Special Interest: aromatic leaves; natural suckering helps with erosion control; dense growth is excellent

nesting for birds; over 40 species of birds enjoy the fruit; can be used as an attractive tall screen or as a specimen tree



Sweet Bay Magnolia *Magnolia*  Light: full sun to part shade Soil: sands, loams, clay, acid soils preferred Moisture: moist soils preferred, drought tolerant once established Bayou Site: slopes, top bank Growth Habit: semi-evergreen, moderate to fast if conditions are right Flower: 3 inch white blooms in spring Fruit: 2 inch cones in fall Size: 20 to 40 ft., sometimes 80 ft. tall and 60 ft. wide

### Form: narrow crown

**Special Interest:** fragrant small flowers; seeds for wildlife; easily identified by the white underside of the leaves; a good tree for a wet spot in your yard



Light: shade to sun, blooms best in sun Soil: acid soil, loam, well drained Moisture: moist, will need supplemental water during severe drought Bayou Site: top bank, upper slope, edge of woods Growth Habit: moderate to fast, deciduous Flower: 1 inch bell shaped flowers in spring

Fruit: 2 inch dangling fruit with two wings Size: 30 ft.

Form: small round crown, brittle branches

Special Interest: pretty yellow fall color, squirrels and other mammals eat fruit, plant in fall, pick the right location and soil for this plant and you will be rewarded



Light: full sun to shade Soil: sands, loam, clay Moisture: well drained, tolerates seasonal poor drainage, drought tolerant Bayou Site: top banks or slopes Growth Habit: fast, evergreen Flower: tiny white flowers in spring Fruit: red drupes on female trees fall and winter, need

Size: 12 to 25 ft.

llex vomitoria

Form: rounded crown, often pruned into hedges Special Interest: fruit great value to birds and mammals; leaves are butterfly larval food; good nesting site for birds; very adaptable tree

male and female to have berries



to partner with the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, the City of Houston, Trees for Houston and others to create demonstration plantings of *Great Small Trees* along Houston's signature waterway, Buffalo Bayou, beginning in 2009 and continuing through the Garden Club of America's Centennial in 2013. The initial plantings will be clustered in selected locations from Shepherd Drive to Sabine Street, which represents the most photographed entrance to the City. This muchloved green space is not currently native but is the result of dramatic reshaping of the bayou by the Army Corps of Engineers. Planting *Great Small Trees* in this location will help restore Buffalo Bayou to its historic environmental context and function. We invite you to join us in this effort.

Please go to *www.buffalobayou.org* or *www.gchouston.org* to learn more!



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#### **Resources and References:**

Forest Trees of Texas, How to Know Them by Texas Forest Service The Bayou Planting Guide by Mark Bowen Texas Trees, A Friendly Guide by Paul W. Cox & Patty Leslie Texas Wildscapes, Gardening for Wildlife by Noreen Damude & Kelly Conrad Bender Trees for Southern Landscapes by William D. Adams Trees of Texas, An Easy Guide to Leaf Identification by Carmine Stahl & Ria McElvaney Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southwest by Robert A. Vines