

Prairie Village Tree Board's Recommended Reading List

Manual of Woody Landscape Plants by Michael A. Dirr

With several editions since it was first published in 1975, this book has become one of the most widely adopted reference texts in horticulture and landscape architecture. Dirr's conversational writing style also makes an enjoyable read for any homeowner wanting a better understanding of trees and shrubs. Dirr doesn't mince words about his likes and dislikes. Writing about Siberian elms, he says, "One of, if not, the world's worst trees. ... Native to eastern Siberia and unfortunately was not left there." The more you learn about trees, the more you'll find yourself agreeing with him.

The Tree Book: Superior Selections for Landscapes, Streetscapes, and Gardens by Michael A. Dirr and Keith S. Warren, Timber Press (2019)

There are so many more different cultivars of trees than there were a generation ago. The choices can be bewildering for someone shopping at a nursery where you might find more five different varieties of red maple and umpteen varieties of oak. Tree guru Michael Dirr teams up with tree breeder and nurseryman Keith Warren to showcase mature versions of all these trees and more with color photos and vivid descriptions to tell us which trees to pick for a particular spot in a yard or a city street.

Urban Forests: A Natural History of Trees and People in the American Cityscape by Jill Jonnes (not Jones) , Viking Press (2016)

For anyone interested in the history of trees in the United States, this is the book and also infinitely readable. Topics range from U.S presidents like Jefferson who were early advocates of protecting our trees, the introduction of invasive trees like the Bradford pear, the near extinction of the American chestnut tree, efforts to save the American elm, and how the latest technology is being used to highlight the importance of trees as green infrastructure.

Native Plants of the Midwest by Alan Branhagen, Timber Press (2016)

Former director of horticulture at Powell Gardens for more than 20 years and now Director of the Natural Land Institute, Branhagen encourages readers to create gardens that reflect the unique beauty of the Midwest. The author describes the best 500 species to incorporate into the landscape including separate chapters for deciduous trees, evergreens, and shrubs. His love for nature comes out through all the chapters in a writing style that never preaches.

Finding the Mother Tree by Suzanne Simard

Simard tells her story about discovering the sophisticated "underworld" of trees. It is fascinating.

Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard by Douglas W. Tallamy

Tallamy suggests individuals can impact the environment in their backyards and provides practical guidance on how to get started.

The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben

Wohlleben draws on groundbreaking scientific research that trees have a social network and can communicate with one another in the forest.

Children's Titles

Curious George Plants a Tree by Monica Perez

Who doesn't love Curious George? This is a fun introduction for children on the value of trees.

The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein

This book is about the gift of giving and one boy's frequent trips to his favorite tree.