

## Hesitate to Plant These Trees

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The shade trees that are generally recommended in the San Antonio area are live oak, Texas red oak (Shumard oak) cedar elm, Mexican sycamore, bur oak, Mexican white oak, Chinese pistache, and chinkapin oak. The trees on the recommended list are there because they have all or some of desirable characteristics like drought tolerance, long life, attractive conformation, and pest resistance.

Trees that are not usually recommended include pecan, hackberry, Chinaberry, mulberry, Chinese tallow, and American sycamore.

Pecan has moved from the desirable shade tree list for several reasons. One reason is that it is no longer practical to irrigate and spray the trees to the extent needed to encourage nut production. The result is that nut production and quality is erratic. It often also means that aphid droppings often rain from the tree and webworms strip leaves to leave unsightly gaps in foliage. Aphid excrement is unpleasant, but branch breakage is even more of a problem. The species is a large species does best in a deep soil and requires regular arborist attention to reduce dangerous branch breakage.

Hackberry is high on the list of desirable wildlife food producer but low on the list of desirable landscape species. The bountiful berry/seeds that feed the birds also produce unwanted seedlings all over the landscape. If hackberries grow in deep soils, they can grow to be a desirable shade tree, but too often hackberries are subject to unattractive conformation, stem breakage and a short life.

If hackberry is number one on the unwanted seedling producer list, Chinaberry is a close second. Chinaberry produces clumps of grape size berries that cause the numerous seedlings. The berries are not readily eaten by wildlife. The unwanted seedlings grow even faster than hackberry seedlings and the trees are prone to cold damage and breakage.

American sycamore is on the "undesirable to grow" list because it grows very fast to a large size and then is susceptible to being killed by anthracnose resulting in a large removal cost. The Mexican sycamore offers the same showy bark, large distinctive leaves, and fast growth but is not susceptible to anthracnose. Recognize Mexican sycamore because it has furry leaf underside. The American sycamore has a smooth leaf underside.

Arizona ash is another fast-growing short-lived tree that is susceptible to anthracnose. If it receives regular attention from an arborist with a pruning saw it can develop a good shape and provide shade with minimal branch death and breakage. Some gardeners grow one or more Arizona ash to provide a summer seed source for area birds.

Mulberry is an unmatched spring berry source both for birds and unwanted seedlings. In April and May, the foliage will be alive with birds feeding on the berries. It grows very quickly and has some of the same inclinations to lose branches as hackberry and Arizona ash. Mulberry is also susceptible to drought damage.

Chinese tallow is another exceptional seedling producer. Some of the berries are eaten by the birds but many germinate into unwanted seedlings. It also produces root sprouts. Tallow has blooms in the spring

that attract bees, but its main desirable feature is the showy fall color. Chinese tallow is drought tolerant and long-lived.

There has been a desirable development in the effort to control unwanted seedlings from such trees as hackberry, mulberry, Chinaberry, Chinese tallow, Arizona ash, and even pecan. As you prune off the seedlings on the fence line or in your shrub border, dab on some of the product "Cut Vine and Stump Killer" to the fresh cut. The herbicide will translocate into the root system of the seedling and kill the whole plant. It is an inexpensive product that is easy to use and effective. With "Cut Vine and Stump Killer" available, it is reasonable to grow one or more hackberry and mulberry trees for their wildlife value without having them take over the yard.