

## Archive for July, 2011

### Right Tree Right Place Primer

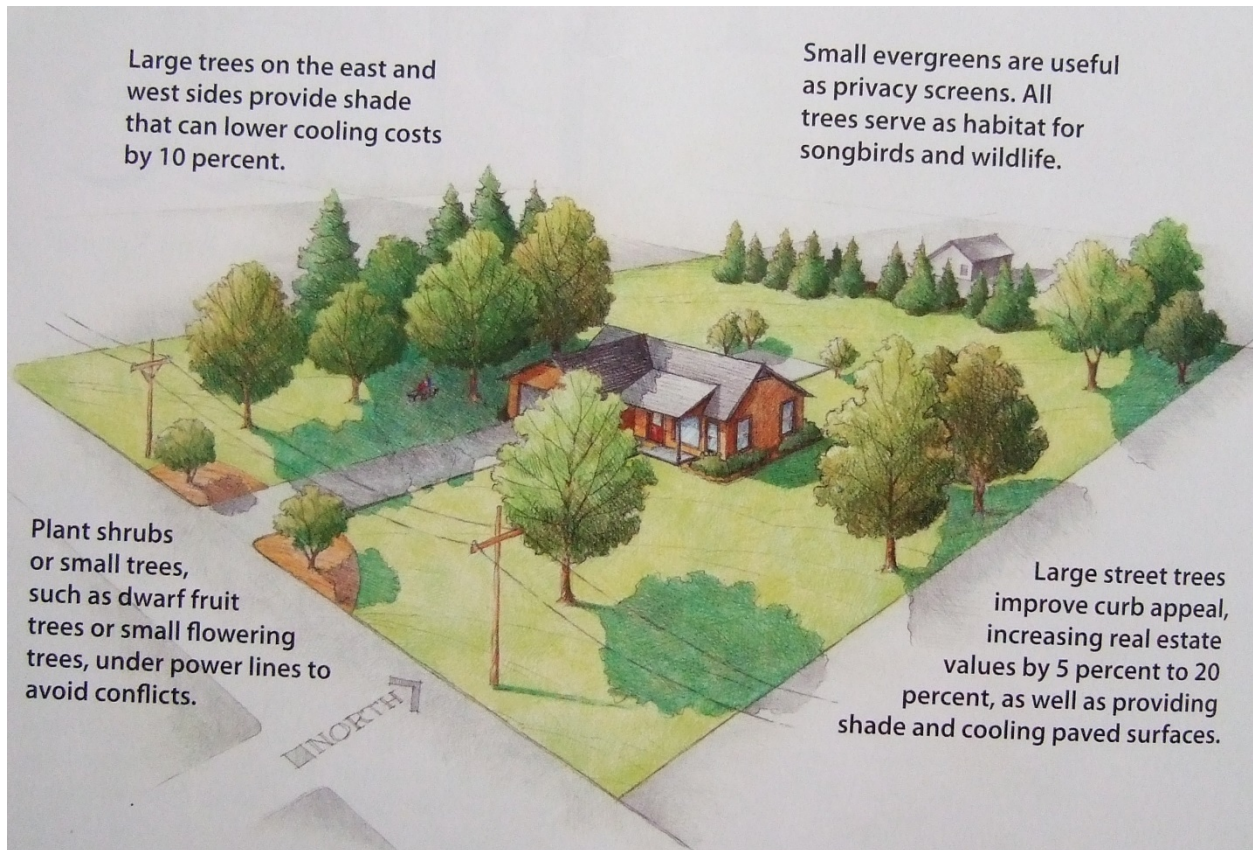
Saturday, July 9th, 2011

Finding the correct tree species for any given spot will enhance the value and appearance of your property, plus it will help you avoid many of the problems in the future. Many urban tree problems are the result of improper location or poor species selection for the planting site. Trees in urban settings are troubled by growing conditions that are less than ideal due to removal of topsoil, soil compaction, soil contamination, air pollution, or lack of growing space. The more limitations on the growing site, the more careful one must be when selecting a tree to plant. Getting the right tree in the right place starts with evaluating the planting site. Listed below is some guidance for doing the evaluation.

1. Determine where you want to plant a tree and what you want it to provide; shading a home or driveway, separating two ownerships, screening a neighbor's yard or street, providing cover for songbirds, nice fall or spring color, etc. Ask yourself, "Why do I want a tree here?" Be specific.
2. Calculate how much space you have. Choose a tree that, at maturity, will fit that space. Ask, "How much room will the tree have to grow in both height and width?"
3. Monitor the site and determine how much sunlight will fall on the area throughout the day. How much sunlight is needed by a tree to grow well varies by species. Some trees grow well as understory trees and tolerate shade well. Others require full sunlight for best growth. All species will have sparser foliage and/or flowers at reduced light levels.
4. Analyze the soil. Trees grow best in a soil that is at least 3 feet deep, and allows water to percolate through it, but can retain adequate moisture for the roots. A certain amount of organic matter is desirable, and the soil needs to be slightly acidic in nature (pH 5-6). Trees growing on poor soils will have more problems than those growing in good soil situations. For information about soil testing, contact your local UMC Extension office, or go online at [extension.missouri.edu](http://extension.missouri.edu).
5. Conduct a simple percolation test by digging a hole 12-18 inches deep and filling it with water. If any water is in the hole 12-18 hours later, then you have heavily compacted or clay soil. Such soils may hold too much water and cause roots to suffocate. Conversely, very sandy or gravelly soils may not hold enough water for some trees. The good soil described above will provide more useable water for the roots.

Careful evaluation of the planting site, plus a specific objective of what you have in mind for a tree, will go a long way in helping you find the right tree for the right place.

Here is a drawing from the Missouri Department of Conservation that may also help with your planning



## The Demise Of Red Bud

Tuesday, July 26th, 2011

Well.....in spite of my continuing efforts to encourage the return of a healthy and strong Red Bud, I am sorry to report that the uncooperative rebel has not developed a strong enough skeletal structure to survive very much longer. I plan to remove him/her from my yardscape sometime this fall. The basic problem has been a tendency, on the part of Red, to develop a wide spreading (vase-like) form that produces very long and weak branches, that easily break away from the stem, tearing it as they go. It has already happened earlier this year during a heavy wind gust. No matter what I've tried, the stubborn Red always has gone back to the same old growth habit, that eventually causes his own demise. So, it's time to cut the losses, and let this version of redbud heritage fade away.

The case of Red Bud serves as a good example of the need to look at tree care realistically, rather than altruistically. You can't save every tree, every time, and it is usually better to remove an individual that is performing poorly in your scheme of things. Yes, you have some time invested in an individual, and it may be a species that should provide the benefit for which it was planted. However, all plants are not alike, even within the same species, and their performance may vary (sometimes considerably) from what one expects of that species. That was the case with Red; he just didn't want to grow like a redbud is supposed to. His growth habit was his undoing, and I couldn't correct the habit no matter what I tried.

Sometimes you just have to start over.

So long Red.....