



High Value Generalist Plants for Every Garden: Canopy Trees

Special care should be taken when planting a canopy tree in your garden. Since they grow so large and live so long, you will want to take extra care making this decision and give a little extra attention to one as it gets established. Be sure to check for powerlines above or nearby (or underground utilities!) and consider how the mature tree will shade your house and garden. While this might require a bit of extra planning, getting a high-value native canopy tree back into the landscape is one of the surest ways to create a tremendous amount of habitat and food for wildlife. We have **bolded** species that Dr. Doug Tallamy recommends from exceptionally productive “keystone genera” his research has identified.

- **Quercus alba** (White Oak) – a generalist across a wide range of wet to dry habitats
- **Quercus rubra** (Red Oak) – generally an upland species, but can also be found on slopes approaching streams
- **Prunus serotina** (Black Cherry) – a fast grower and a prolific supporter of insects and birds
- **Salix nigra** (Black Willow) – a fast grower that sometimes grows as more of a large shrub. Prefers moist/wet soils up to periodic inundation.
- **Betula nigra** (River Birch) – another fast-growing smaller tree that prefers moist to wet conditions.
- *Ulmus americana* (American Elm) – we grow wild-type elms so while we cannot guarantee resistance to Dutch Elm Disease, we try to collect only from wild plants that are healthy and robust. We believe this practice will help foster future resistant populations from diverse genetics.
- *Carya cordiformis* (Bitternut Hickory) – our fastest growing native hickory. Can be found in a range of mesic (medium moisture) habitats.
- *Acer rubrum* (Red Maple) – while not a “keystone” plant like the others, this widely distributed tree grows naturally in every county in Virginia across a wide range of habitats.