

## HOME & GARDEN TIPS

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### Choose the Right Shade Tree for Fast Growth

Planting trees for shade is a high priority on new or renovated landscapes. Without shade, patios and decks may be less useful during the heat of summer. When you need shade, you need it now. You don't want to wait 50 years for the tree to grow while you swelter in the sun.

However if you indiscriminately select trees for fast growth, you may end up with weak-wooded, short-lived, insect and disease prone trees that may have invasive roots or produce messy fruit.

So when you choose a fast growing shade tree, consider its good and bad characteristics. Shade trees will mature at different heights and spreads, so match your tree with the space you want to put it in.

Put large shade trees such as red maple and willow oak at least 20-30 feet away from the house. Small to medium trees such as crape myrtle, lacebark elm and river birch can shade courtyards, decks and small lawn spaces.

Red maple and pin oak will cast moderate to heavy shade that may hinder sun loving grasses and shrubs, while crape myrtle and bald cypress cast light, filtered shade that allows shade-tolerant grasses and flowers underneath.

Trees with ascending branches such as lacebark elm and river birch are great to shade sitting and parking areas, providing ample room overhead. Trees with low-hanging branches such as pin oak and bald cypress are great for screening or the middle of large lawns. Crape myrtles work well in restricted spaces such as narrow side yards.

When you get your tree, look for a sturdy, straight trunk with well-shaped branches and plenty of healthy roots. Check the common name and botanical name to make sure it's the tree you want.

Beware of problematic trees that can be nuisances such as silver maple, box elder, mulberry, and mimosa.

Study the characteristics of some fast-growing shade trees that are fairly problem-free. Make sure they fit your space and are adapted to your planting site.