

# Trees and Shrubs: Drought, Heat, Cold Tolerant Species

This list of trees and shrubs is intended to provide guidance for choosing a tree or shrub which will grow in Las Vegas, New Mexico yards. This list of species is for residential yards, not City Parks which are regularly watered during the summer.

Purpose. Before selecting a tree, think about the purposes of the tree you are going to plant: do you want it for shade, privacy screen, windbreak, beauty, wildlife value? Due to unpredictable late frosts, fruit producing trees are not recommended as a food source.

For more information about what to look for buying a tree, watering, correct planting, watering, and pruning methods, read the Tree Owner's Manual. A tree is an investment in both time and money. You can find the manual at [http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/uf/tom\\_natl/tree\\_owners\\_manual\\_web\\_res.pdf](http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/uf/tom_natl/tree_owners_manual_web_res.pdf)

Site selection. Before buying a tree, determine where you are going to plant it, based on the purpose of the tree and these additional factors. Deciduous trees lose their leaves in the winter; if you plant them on the south and west side of your home, they will help with cooling during the summer. Because they lose their leaves, they allow winter sun to help warm your house. Reduce winds by planting trees and shrubs on the windy side of your home.

Do not plant a tall tree near or under electric lines (height and width are listed in the descriptions). PNM recommends that a tree which is 25 feet tall at maturity be at least 15 feet from a power line; a 30 foot tall tree should be at least 30 feet away from a power line. Trees with large brittle branches should not be planted over a target such as a roof, car parking area, gazebo, etc.

Trees with shallow or invasive roots should not be planted near buildings, sidewalks, plumbing, or sewer lines.

Mature tree sizes are approximate; please understand that size and growth rate depend on growing conditions.

Soil. In general, urban soils in Las Vegas are mostly alkaline clay. Clay soils hold water. Avoid planting trees in clay where occasional puddles of water collect (the roots will rot).

Water. Newly planted trees need some water to become established (usually 2—3 years). Although the trees listed here are mainly drought tolerant, that does not mean they can survive a long-term drought. Trees will need watering during periods of prolonged drought—most of the trees listed here will need less water. Trees and shrubs which tolerate some aridity will need 3—6 soakings during a prolonged dry season. [Note: sometimes trees advertised as drought tolerant may actually need moderate amounts of water.]

We have all noticed the recent death of many of our native Pinon and Ponderosa trees. Extended drought, heat, and drying winds have stressed these trees and made them less able to fight off insects. Evergreen trees need some precipitation in winter.

One method of watering is to dig several 12-inch holes under the drip line of trees. Most trees have roots about 15-18 inches below the top of the soil. The drip line is the area directly below the ends of branches; as the tree becomes wider, the drip line moves away from the trunk. Fill the holes with water which will drain directly into the root area; evaporation is decreased and deep watering is possible because the water does not spread out over the surface of the soil.

The Las Vegas Tree Board highly recommends you collect any water which comes off your roof.

Plant for Success. Trees and shrubs need at least 6 hours of sun except where noted. Fall is a good time for planting a tree, the weather is cooler and water evaporates more slowly; it is said that fall planting is

less stressful because it allows the roots to grow. There are fewer drying winds in the late fall and early winter.

The planting hole should be at least twice as wide as the root ball. It should be dug a few inches lower than necessary to loosen the soil, but put the soil back in to achieve the right height. Look for the bulge on the trunk or main stem just above the root system; this root collar should be slightly above the soil surface. Many trees die or do poorly because they are planted too deep. If you have a bare root tree, slightly spread out the roots. If the tree roots are wrapped, remove any wire, burlap, plastic. Fill half the hole with soil, firming it with your hands; add some water at this point and continue filling the hole until the soil is level with the ground. Gently firm the soil and water again. Make a ditch or holes just outside the planting hole. Do not let the trunk or stem sit in water because it can rot. You can instead dig five 12- inch deep holes around the tree and fill these holes with water. Then apply mulch.

**Mulch.** Organic mulch will save water by reducing evaporation; it also keeps the soil and roots cooler in the summer. Do not use rock or stones as mulch because they absorb and retain heat (Knopf). Organic mulch breaks down and slowly enriches the soil. Mulch should be 4—5 inches deep, and at least 5 inches away from the trunk or stem. As the tree grows wider, the watering holes or ditch and the mulch should be extended out toward the drip line. Many ground covers grow in mulch.

**Pruning.** Proper pruning is essential. Never top a tree: it permanently weakens the tree and shortens its life. Improper pruning will result in more pruning problems in the future because weaker branches grow back. Improper pruning may leave the tree vulnerable to unwanted insects and disease. The Tree Owner's Manual has information about pruning young trees. To protect your investment in trees, we recommend getting a certified arborist for pruning large trees.

**Names.** Trees and shrubs are listed alphabetically by the Latin name, which is the name you should use when you buy the tree. Common names are listed second and are not as accurate because there can be more than one common name, or the common name may be used for more than one tree. Trees and shrubs are listed together because there is often no clear difference between a small tree and a large shrub. The index lists common names with their more precise Latin names.

**Zones.** The USDA has Las Vegas listed in Zone 5 meaning that plants are cold tolerant to about -20 degrees. In the last 50 years, there has been at least one winter with thermometer readings of minus -50°. Mature trees in Lincoln Park did not die but suffered frost cracking along their trunks. Because most trees live a long time, you may wish to choose trees which are rated for USDA Zone 4 or lower.

This species list is not complete—revisions and new species will be added. For more information, a bibliography and reliable internet sources are provided at the end of this paper. You may also call the City of Las Vegas for the number of a Tree Board volunteer.

***Acer Ginnada*—Amur Maple**—(USDA Zone 3) This deciduous tree grows to 25 feet high. Fall color is variable. It is easy to transplant. White flowers appear in late April. It can be used as a container plant, making it a bit easier to water with reclaimed water and thus survive a drought. It has moderate water needs.

***Acer negundo*—Boxelder, Ash-leaved Maple**—(USDA Zone 3) This deciduous tree has a broad rounded crown. This is a fast growing tree, reaching 60 feet high and wide. It is also a short-lived tree. It seeds readily and can become a weed. It produces weak branches which may break in strong winds or heavy snows; regular pruning is important. The wide and shallow root system robs water and nutrients from the soil and makes it difficult to grow other plants near it. This tree is home to box-elder bugs and aphids: if you have parked your car under this tree, you will have noticed the sugary sap which drips

from the aphids. We do not recommend this tree because it is virtually a weed in Las Vegas; Dirr calls it a noxious weed tree. It is included in this list because it is common to the area though it is not a desirable tree.

***Amelanchier utahensis*—Utah Serviceberry**—(USDA Zone 2) This native deciduous shrub grows from 6—15 feet tall. In spring there are fragrant clusters of white flowers which appear before the leaves develop. It produces edible purple fruit which attracts wildlife. It grows on rocky hillsides and along stream banks. Water needs are low after it is established.

***Artemisia filifolia*—Sand Sagebrush**—(USDA Zone 4-5) This fragrant silver-gray evergreen shrub grows to 4 feet, and has tiny narrow leaves and graceful branches. It does best in sandy soils, although it will grow in clay soils with appropriate drainage. Water needs are low after it is established.

***Artemisia tridentata*—Big Sagebrush, Mountain Sage, Bigleaf Sage**—(Zone 2) This native semi-evergreen shrub grows from 2 to 7 feet tall. It has hairy green-gray leaves  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long with three teeth at the tip. It has inconspicuous flowers and strongly aromatic foliage. It may be pruned to encourage branching. It does best in well-drained soils but will grow in clay soils. It needs sun. It requires very little water once established. This rugged native is found in rocky or gravelly slopes. It attracts wildlife. Tea was made from the leaves and used to treat coughs, colds, and indigestion.

***Atriplex canescens*—Four-Wing Saltbush**—(Zone 3) This native evergreen shrub is small and dense, growing 3—6 feet high to 5 feet wide in sunny dry sites. Native habitat is the western desert and Great Basin areas. It has narrow gray leaves. Female plants produce lots of tan-colored fruit. It needs no water once established, tolerates alkaline and salt soils. The seeds attract birds. It is fire resistant, drought tolerant and deer resistant. It has been used as a wildlife habitat, for erosion control, a specimen plant, and as a screen or windbreak.

***Berberis thunbergii*—Japanese Barberry**—(Zone 3) This deciduous shrub has holly-like leaves on slender arching branches. It grows to 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet tall and wide, needs little water once established. It does well in harsh climates and poor soils. It does not tolerate wet soil. In the fall the dense dark green leaves turns yellow to red and bright red berries appear. The spring flowers are greenish yellow.

***Caragana aborescens*—Siberian Peashrub**—(Zone 2) This deciduous shrub grows rapidly to 10—15 feet high and wide, and is very tolerant of poor soils, drought, alkalinity and wind. The 2—3 inch leaves have 4 to 6 leaflets. The bright yellow 1-inch flowers appear on the previous year's growth and mature into 2-inch seedpods. The roots fix nitrogen in the soil. Leaves turn yellow-green in fall. This plant is native to Siberia and Mongolia. It can be used as a hedge, screen, or windbreak. It is very winter hardy and needs little water once established.

***Caragana pygmaea*—Pygmy Peashrub**—(Zone 3) This deciduous shrub is a smaller version of *C. aborescens* (above). It grows to about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet tall. It is native to Siberia and withstands winds, heat, and cold and alkaline soils. It needs little water once established.

***Catalpa speciosa*—Western Catalpa, Northern Catalpa**—(Zone 4) This deciduous tree has a rounded crown and grows to 40—60 feet tall. Growth is moderately fast: to 15 feet over a 7 year period under good conditions. It has heart-shaped leaves. The 2-inch trumpet-shaped flowers appear in late spring and produce long bean-like fruit. Do not plant over walkways because the fruit and petals are slippery after they fall off the tree. The tree provides good shade, too shady for the center of lawns and gardens. It does best in drained soils and has moderate to low water needs although it does best in moist soils. It adapts well to heat and cold extremes. It should be protected from the drying effects of wind by planting

the tree downwind of sheltering buildings or other trees. The branches are brittle. Light pruning when the tree is young will produce a tree with a tall trunk and an umbrella-shaped crown. This tree is recommended by the Santa Fe Xeriscape Council.

***Ceanothus americanus***—**Redroot, Wild Snowball, Mountain Sweet, New Jersey Tea**—(Zone 4) This shrub grows 3—4 feet tall and wide. It does well in well-drained soil and tolerates dryness once established because the large reddish roots grow deep. It will tolerate some shade. Flowers are white.

***Ceanothus fendleri***—**Fendler's Wild Lilac, Deerbrush, Buckbrush**—(Zone 4) One of the common names is misleading because this shrub does not resemble the lilac bush (*Syringia vulgaris*). This native plant has gray-green leaves with wooly hairs underneath. It grows between 3 and 6 feet tall. The flowers are bluish-white and bloom between April and June. In the wild, it grows on rocky slopes which are well drained. It is susceptible to root rot and should not be planted near lawns or other plants which are watered. It has spines and should not be planted near areas where people walk or children play.

***Celtis occidentalis***—**Western Hackberry, Common Hackberry**—(Zone 3) This hardy deciduous tree has a rounded crown with bright green finely toothed oval leaves. It is a big tree, growing 50 feet high by 50 feet wide. It tolerates heat, alkaline soil, and needs little water once established. It is good in windy locations (young trees may need to be loosely supported for 1 year only). It has deep roots, an advantage because the roots do not cause sidewalk heaving. The tree resists urban pollution. It is recommended that this tree be purchased in containers; bare-root plants do not transplant well. This tree is recommended by the Santa Fe Xeriscape Council.

***Cercis occidentalis***—**Western Redbud, Pata de Vaca**—(Zone 3) This is a small deciduous tree or shrub which grows to 20 feet. The heart shaped leaves are 2—3 inches wide. Purplish flowers appear between February and April, before the leaves appear. The flowers grow on the old wood and produce pea-like pods. It is native to New Mexico to 6,000 feet altitude and is found in moist soils along streams and rocky slopes. It needs little water after it is established, though it cannot properly be called drought tolerant. It belongs to the legume family and fixes nitrogen in the soils. According to PNM, this tree can be planted under power lines.

***Cerocarpus ledifolius***—**Curl-leaf Mountain Mahogany**—(Zone 3) This shrub grows in sun or part shade, to 10 feet tall. The leaves are curled at the edges and are green on top, with white hairs underneath. Yellow flowers appear in spring followed by feathery seed heads. It can be pruned into a hedge. Habitat is dry mountain slopes, and grassland areas in coniferous forests. It needs little water once established. Native Americans made a red dye by grinding the roots and mixing them with juniper ashes and powdered alder bark.

***Cerocarpus montanus***—**Mountain Mahogany**—(Zone 2) Small dark green leaves with white underneath grow in a dense branching pattern on this 4-6 foot tall and wide deciduous shrub. In the fall, leaves are red-brown color and there are plumed seed tails. It is cold tolerant and needs little or no water once established.

***Chamaebatiaria millefolium***—**Fernbush**—This deciduous shrub grows 2—5 feet high and wide. Leaves are fern-like, aromatic, and olive-green. White showy flowers appear in mid to late summer. It tolerates most soils and does best when soils are well drained. It needs some watering for 2 years until established, and then it has little water needs. It can be used for screening and hedges. The natural habitat is rocky places. This shrub is also recommended by the Santa Fe Xeriscape Council.

***Chrysothamnus nauseosus*—Chamisa, Rabbitbrush**—(Zone 2) This native shrub has narrow gray-green leaves. Flat-topped yellow flowers develop on the new growth in late summer. The upright rounded shrub grows to 5 feet tall by 4 feet wide. It is recommended for use in low maintenance and native plant gardens. It helps control erosion. It is drought tolerant, and grows in alkaline soils in the high desert and intermountain ranges in New Mexico. It can be severely pruned. The slender branches, stripped of bark, were used for basket weaving. There is also a dwarf variety that is only knee high.

***Cotinus coggygia*—Common Smoketree, Smokebush**—(Zone 4) This is an upright spreading multi-stemmed deciduous shrub or small tree. It grows at a medium to rapid rate, depending on conditions. Mature height is 20 feet by 15 feet wide. It has simple oval leaves that are bluish green and turn yellow-red in the fall. In June—August, flowers produce approximately 6-inch long fuzzy hairs, which are soft and smoke-like. This plant is adaptable to a wide variety of soils, but soils must be well drained. It tolerates some aridity and is somewhat drought resistant when established; fast drainage is a must to avoid root rot. Heavy clay soil is to be avoided—plant with boulders and rocks and sand mixed into clay. Small stems may be killed by cold but the tree and roots are cold hardy. The tree is native to south Europe and Asia. This tree is also recommended by the Santa Fe Xeriscape Council.

***Cotinus obvatus*—American Smoketree**—(Zone 4) This tree is similar to the Common Smoketree, above. It tolerates well-drained limestone soils. It will need some water in drought conditions. It can grow to 30' high and wide.

***Cotoneaster apiculatus*—Cranberry Cotoneaster**—(Zone 4) This is a dense deciduous shrub 3 feet tall and 6 feet wide. It has small round leaves that turn red in fall. Fruit is in red clusters. It does well in heavy clay and alkaline soils and is drought tolerant once established. It does not do well in heat and will do best planted on the cooler northeast side of a building. It can be used as a low hedge.

***Cotoneaster multiflorus*—Many-flowered Cotoneaster**—(Zone 4) This large deciduous shrub grows to 12 feet high and wide. Growth is slow when the plant is becoming established, then growth speeds up. Flowers are white and produce red berries for fall color. Soil should be well drained; do not let it stand in puddles. It needs little water once established.

***Cowania mexicana*—Mexican Cliffrose**—(Zone 3) This native multi-branched evergreen shrub or small tree grows from 6—10 feet high and wide. The trunk is crooked and the crown is open. The thick dark green leaves are small and resinous, with 3—7 deep lobes. In May, there are fragrant yellow-white flowers that produce fruit with long plumes. Native habitat is dry rocky hills and plateaus. It tolerates drought, heat and cold. The shredded bark was used to make rope and sandals.

***Elaeagnus angustifolia*—Russian Olive, Oleaster**—This tree is on the New Mexico Noxious Weed list. Please do not plant it.

***Eurotia lanata*—Winterfat, Lamb's Tail**—(No zone found: grows between 3—8,000 feet altitude). This low deciduous shrub ranges from 1—3 feet tall. Leaves are narrow, covered with white cottony hairs, and the leaf edges roll under. Woolly white fruits grow on male trees and are good for dried arrangements. Habitat is sandy alkaline soils. It needs little water once established. The dry leaves remain on the plant during winter and are eaten by sheep, hence the name 'winterfat'.

***Fallugia paradoxa*—Apache Plume**—(Zone 3) This native shrub grows to 4 feet tall and wide. The small lobed leaves are deep green on top and brownish underneath. Branches are straw colored with flaky bark. Long blooming white flowers make pink feathery plumes in May. The feathery seeds are as beautiful as the flowers. Growth is moderate to rapid. It does best in well-drained soil; it grows naturally

along sides of dry washes and hillsides. Little water is needed once it is established. It is hardy, drought tolerant, and can tolerate alkaline soils.

***Fendlera rupicola*—Cliff Fendlerbush, False Mockorange**—(No zone found: grows between 3—7,000 feet altitude.) This deciduous shrub grows to 6 feet tall. It has narrow 1-inch leaves which curl under, and reddish new bark which turns gray and shreds with age. The flowers of this native shrub resemble Mock Orange. The flowers produce an acorn-like fruit colored gray-green. It often grows between rock crevices in canyons. Soil should be well drained. Water needs are low to moderate once established. ‘Rupicola’ means ‘Rock dweller’.

***Forestiera neomexicana*—New Mexico Privet, New Mexico Olive, Palo Blanco**—(Zone 3) This is a native deciduous shrub or small tree with erect spreading branches. It grows to about 8 feet tall and wide. It has smooth oblong medium green leaves. The small inconspicuous flowers produce seeds which look like black olives. It is multi-stemmed and will need pruning to make it into a single-stemmed tree. It is a fairly fast-growing plant, depending on conditions. This is a good screening plant. It is drought tolerant, though it will grow faster with some water. Extreme cold will cause some dieback though the plant is not killed. According to PNM, this tree may be planted under power lines.

***Fraxinus species*—*Fraxinus americana*—White Ash**—(Zone 4) These fast growing deciduous tree grows to 40—60 feet high. It can grow in wet soil and tolerates cold, but hot dry winds are not good for it. It needs some water. There are many cultivars: ‘Marshall’ is fast growing, and ‘Patmore’ is tolerant of extremely cold weather. In recent years, many ash are dying due to a borer, scale and other insect infestations; perhaps it is better not to plant more than one of this tree. ***Sorbus acuparia*—Mountain Ash**—(Zone 3) grows to 20—40 feet tall, has moderate water needs, and is also susceptible to borers.

***Ginkgo biloba*—Ginkgo, Maidenhair Tree**—(Zone 4) This deciduous tree has distinctive bright green fan-shaped leaves. Leaves turn yellow in fall. This tree grows from 50—80 feet tall and 30—40 feet wide. Under good conditions, it can grow 1 foot per year and will need watering when dry until it is about 20 feet tall, then growth slows. It prefers deep, loose, well-drained soil; it is adaptable to alkaline soils, is salt and heat tolerant. The female plant produces bad smelling fruit; therefore it is recommended that cloned male plants be planted. The cultivar ‘Autumn Gold’ is reliably male and grows to 30 feet tall with golden fall color. Ginkgo has been growing on Earth for 150 million years.

***Gleditsia triacanthos*—Locust, Honey Locust**—(Zone 4) This is not the same tree as *Robinia pseudo-acadia*, Locust or Flowering Locust, an example of why Latin names are used to avoid confusion. This is a deciduous tree with spreading arching branches and an oval crown. Depending on conditions, this tree can grow 20 feet in 10 years. It reaches 35—70 feet tall with a slightly smaller spread. The trunk and branches are thorny: do not plant it near walkways. The roots also heave paving. It is late to leaf out and the leaves turn yellow and drop in early fall. It produces fragrant flowers which develop into 8” long pods. The pods attract wildlife. Once established, it is tolerant of drought, heat, cold, wind, and alkaline soils though it does best with moderate water in rich soil. It can be grown in a lawn because it is not a dense shade tree and allows light through to plants growing under it. ***Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis*** is thornless and has fewer pods. Do not overplant *Gleditsia* because it is susceptible to many diseases and insect pests.

***Gymnocladus dioica*—Kentucky Coffeetree**—(Zone 3) This deciduous tree has leaves which are divided into leaflets up to 30 inches long and 20 inches wide. It is late to leaf out in the spring and has early leaf loss in the fall. It has a narrow crown, and grows to about 50—60 feet high with a 40 foot spread. It is fast growing to about 10 feet. The small fragrant flowers produce 6—9 inch pods. Leaves and seeds are poisonous when eaten. Seeds were once ground for a coffee substitute; the roasting of the seeds

makes them non-poisonous. ‘Espresso’ is seedless. This tree does well in rich moist soils but is also drought tolerant after it is established, though it needs some water in severe drought. This tree is listed by the Santa Fe Xeriscape Council.

***Holodiscus dumosus*—Rock Spirea**—(Zone 2) This deciduous native shrub grows from 3—10 feet tall, depending on conditions. Leaves are coarsely toothed, deep green on top with white hairs underneath. It produces 5 inch clusters of white flowers which fade to yellow-orange and stay on the shrub for a long time. This plant will grow in semi-shade (half day sun is needed). Prune after the flowers turn brown and wither. This plant is related to Spirea and is similar in appearance. Its natural habitat is shady canyons, rocky slopes, and at the bases of cliffs. It needs little water and is recommended for use in low maintenance gardens.

***Juglans nigra*—Black Walnut**—(Zone 4) This deciduous tree grows to about 70 feet tall and wide. It does best in rich moist soil but can live in clay and drier soils where it will grow more slowly. This tree develops a tap root which can make it difficult to transplant. Vegetables and flowers do not grow well when planted near Black Walnut. This tree has aphids which drip honeydew—do not plant near a parking lot or patio.

**Juniper species.** These evergreens come in many sizes and shapes and may be used as ground covers, windbreaks and ornamentals. Once established, Junipers need little water; they grow in alkaline soils. Soils should be well drained. Wet soils will rot the roots; therefore Junipers should not be planted near watered lawns or gardens. The male trees produce pollen. Junipers can be pruned. In areas surrounding Las Vegas, some native Junipers have become drought stressed and have succumbed to insects and disease.

***Juniperus communis*—Common Juniper**—(Zone 2) This native evergreen has spreading branches, a crooked trunk, and an irregular crown. This slow-growing tree or shrub will become 5—10 feet tall with an 8—12 foot spread. The sharp pointed needles are at right angles to the stem, gray-green in the summer, tan-brownish in winter. The cones are like berries. It is drought tolerant once established and withstands drying winds. Some cultivars can be used as ground cover: ***Juniper communis montana*** or ***J.c. sibirica*** will be about 1 foot tall and 6 feet wide; these are native to alpine climates and should be mulched. ***J. communis*** ‘Compressa’ will grow to 2 feet tall, good for rock gardens. And ***J. communis*** ‘Stricta’ is a narrow columnar tree, growing to 12—15 feet high.

***Juniperus horizontalis*—Creeping Juniper**—(Zone 4) This evergreen is a low growing and spreading ground cover. There are many cultivars that are low growing and spreading: ***J. horizontalis*** ‘Wiltoni’—**Blue Carpet** or **Blue Rug Juniper**—grows to 4 inches high and 8 feet wide with silvery blue foliage; ***J. horizontalis*** ‘Bar Harbor’ is faster growing but the foliage in the center of the plant dies back with age, leaving a bare area.

***Juniperus monosperma*—One Seed Juniper**—(No zone found: it grows between 3,500—8000 feet altitude.) This native evergreen shrub or small tree has spreading branches with gray-green foliage. It does not have one main trunk. It may reach 25 feet tall in well-drained rocky soils. It is drought tolerant and needs little watering when established. Colorado State says it is “among the most drought-enduring evergreens.” It has small dark blue berry-like cones. This is one of the most common trees in New Mexico. The fruit was ground into flour and made into bread; the bark was woven into mats and baskets.

***Juniperus sabina*—Savin Juniper**—(Zone 3) This is a spreading evergreen shrub with stiff branches and dark green foliage which becomes yellow tipped in the winter. This shrub is slow growing to 4—6

feet high with a 5—10 foot spread. It grows best in limestone and well-drained soils. There are several groundcover cultivars in this group:

*J.s.* ‘Acadia’ grows 1 foot high and 10 feet wide with bright green dense foliage.

*J.s.* ‘Broadmore’ (Zone 4) grows 14 inches high and 10 feet wide and is more mounded.

*J.s.* ‘Calgary Carpet’ grows 6—9 inches high and 10 feet wide with soft green foliage; it is also extremely cold tolerant.

*J.s.* ‘Tam’ is 1 ½ feet tall and 10—20 feet wide with blue-green foliage and is widely used.

***Juniperus scopulorum*—Rocky Mountain Juniper, Western Red Cedar**—(Zone 3) This native evergreen shrub or small tree has a short trunk and branches which eventually curve down. The berries are bright blue with a whitish coating. It grows at a moderate rate, reaching a height of 20—30 feet tall and a width of 15 feet, depending on conditions. It is drought resistant, but does best with some water. It is used for screens, hedges and the durable wood is often used as posts. ***J. scopulorum*** ‘Medora’ grows into a narrow columnar tree, growing to 10 feet tall by 10 feet wide.

***Juniperus utahensis* or *Juniperus osteosperma*—Utah Juniper**—(No zone found: it grows between 3—8,000 feet altitude). This native evergreen grows to 20—30 feet high. The twigs are greenish. Utah Juniper has one tree-like trunk; otherwise it is difficult to tell the difference between it and a One Seed Juniper (*J. monosperma*, above), the bluish berries are slightly larger. It will not tolerate water-logged soils; little supplemental water is needed after it is established.

***Juniperus virginiana*—Eastern Redcedar**—(Zone 3) This juniper grows to 40 feet tall and 15 feet wide. It needs sun and makes a good windbreak. The cultivar, ‘Skyrocket’ is one of the narrowest junipers. It grows 15 feet tall and about 15 feet wide and has blue green foliage.

***Lonicera japonica* ‘Halliana’—Hall’s Honeysuckle**—(Zone 4) This is a deciduous shrubby vine which climbs to 15 feet and can cover 100 square feet. It can crowd out other plants. Highly fragrant flowers are white, changing to yellow. Because the sweet scent of the flowers attracts bees, it should not be planted where people sit or walk. It also attracts hummingbirds. It tolerates poor drainage and some drought once it is established but it does best with moderate watering during dry periods. With support it can be used as a privacy screen on a fence. It has been used as ground cover on a hill. It needs heavy pruning each year to prevent undergrowth from building up and becoming a fire hazard. ***Lonicera sempervirens*, Coral Honeysuckle**, has attractive coral colored flowers and is heat and cold tolerant. ***Lonicera tatarica*, Tartarian Honeysuckle**, will also grow in Las Vegas.

***Maclura ponifera*—Osage Orange, Hedge Apple**—(Zone 4) This tree is native to Oklahoma and Texas and is naturalized in New Mexico. It grows 30 feet high and wide. If a male tree is present, the female tree produces a 4 inch 2-pound fruit; (plant this tree so the fruit will not hit people or cars when it falls.) This tree tolerates heat, cold, wind, and alkaline and poor soils. It has ½ inch thorns so do not plant it where children play. It is fast growing and needs very little water when established. The cultivar, ‘Double O’ is thornless.

***Malus* species—Flowering Crabapple**—This deciduous small tree has many varieties and cultivars. Leaves are deep green to nearly purple, depending on the variety. Trees flower in spring and produce crabapples in the fall. The fruit will attract birds. The size of the tree, 15—30 feet tall, depends on the type. All *Malus* species tolerate heat, and live in various well-drained soils. They need some water. There are over 200 kinds of ornamental crabapples, and if different kinds are planted together, the flowering period will be extended. Crabapples should not be planted where people walk because the fruit will be stepped on. Only cold hardy cultivars are listed here. *Malus* sp. ‘Spring Snow’ is sterile and produces no fruit from the fragrant white flowers. Many popular cultivars are susceptible to fireblight, rust,

scab, scale, borers, and beetles and for this reason, ‘Hopa’, ‘Eleyi,’ Bechtels’, and ‘Red Silver’ are not recommended. The following cultivars are notably cold hardy (Dirr says to -40 degrees): ‘Jackii’, ‘Dolgo’, ‘Red Jade’, ‘Red Splendor’, and ‘Selkirk’. Dirr also lists cultivars which are resistant to diseases and insects, a few of which are listed here with their flower color: ‘Autumn Glory’ (white), ‘Angel Choir’(white), ‘American Masterpiece’ (red), ‘Cardinal’ (red), ‘Firebelle’ (white), ‘Gwendolyn’ (pink).

***Perovskia atriplicifolia*—Russian Sage**—(Zone 5) This deciduous shrubby plant grows to 3 feet tall and needs very little water once established. It has gray-green leaves. Lavender clusters of flowers appear above the leaves in late summer. Cut off old flowers to increase blooming time and in the spring prune back the stems to live wood.

***Picea abies*—Norway Spruce and *Picea engelmannii*—Englemann Spruce** are probably too big for the average yard at 60 feet tall by 30 or more feet wide. Both are Zone 3. All *Picea* have shallow roots and do best in cool climates with moderate water. Mulch can keep roots and soil cool, slow evaporation, as well as enrich the soil.

***Picea glauca ‘conica’*—Dwarf Alberta Spruce**—(Zone 2) This evergreen has short fine needles and is pyramidal in shape, looking like a miniature Christmas tree. It is slow growing to 10 feet in 35 years. It should be sheltered from drying winds and heat. It will need some water when it is hot and dry: avoid planting it on the south side of a building or wall. Well-drained soil is recommended.

***Picea glauca densata*—Black Hills Spruce**—(Zone 2) This pyramid-shaped spruce is slow growing and dense, reaching 30—40 feet in 35 years. This native needs infrequent watering. It can be used as a screen, and can be pruned to slow the growth. It attracts birds, as well as aphids and spider mites. It will need some water when conditions are both hot and dry.

***Pinus aristata*—Bristlecone Pine**—(Zone 4) This evergreen native tree is very slow growing to 50 feet high, under favorable conditions. The pyramid shape of the young tree becomes more irregular with age. The short dark green needles are dense and bushy. Cones are prickly and 2--3 inches long with prickly bristles on the ends. ‘Aristata’ refers to the paint-brush-like bristles on the cones. Well-drained soil is recommended. It is cold and drought resistant and should have protection from drying winds. It needs sun, but will do better if planted in the coolest part of your yard. Infrequent watering is needed during drought. It can be grown in a container and is also suitable for rock gardens. It does not tolerate smoke pollution. This is one of the oldest known living plants and there is a 4,700 year-old tree still living in Nevada.

***Pinus edulis*—Pinon Pine**—(Zone 3) This is a slow growing evergreen reaching 10—20 feet tall and wide. The tree is small, bushy, and compact with a rounded spreading crown. It is the New Mexico State Tree, and lives on dry rocky foothills and mesas. It is drought resistant, needing little supplemental water once established. It does not do well in wet heavy clay soil; soils should be well-drained. Edible nuts are produced once or twice in a 7-year period. Drought and heat stressed pinons have been unable to fight off pinon beetles in Santa Fe, Las Vegas, and Denver.

***Pinus nigra*—Austrian Black Pine, European Black Pine**—(Zone 3) This is a dense ornamental evergreen that becomes broad and flat-topped with age. Growth is moderate, depending on conditions, up to 40—60 feet tall, 20—40 feet wide. The needles are shiny dark green and 3—6 inches long, growing two to a bundle; the cones are 2—3 inches long. It is hardy, has low water needs, and adapts to winter cold and wind. It is tolerant of heat and some drought—prolonged drought without water will kill it. It tolerates heavy clay and alkaline soils but will do best in well drained soils. It can be used as a screen or windbreak—it was heavily planted to restore the dust bowl area.

***Pinus ponderosa*—Ponderosa Pine**—(Zone 3) This is the most common western pine which grows best between 7,000—10,000 feet altitude. It lives a long time and grows to 100 feet tall or more. Dark green needles are about 2 inches long, growing two to a bundle; cones are 3—4 inches long. It has thick reddish scaly bark. Loggers have called this tree “yellow pine” because the bark becomes gold in color in old large trees. Habitat is mostly in mountainous dry sites; it will not do well in heat, warm winds, or soggy soils. Drought and heat have recently contributed to Ponderosa death in Las Vegas and for this reason it may not be an especially good choice for planting it here.

***Potentilla fruticosa*—Cinquefoil, Shrubby Potentilla**—(Zone 2) This 3—4 foot tall very rugged native shrub has leaves divided into 3 to 7 leaflets with their edges curled under. The flowers have 5 petals and last all summer. Potentilla does best in full sun, but will also bloom in semi-shade. It needs some water during droughts and well-drained soil, though it tolerates poor soil and drought after it is established. *P. astrosanguinea* has red flowers and grows to 2 feet tall. Dirr lists 81 cultivars: most have yellow flowers.

***Prunus americana*—Sand Plum, Wild Plum**—(Zone 3) This native deciduous shrub or small trees grows to 15—20 feet tall. It has dark green saw toothed oval leaves with a long pointed tip. It has a broad crown and spreads by root sprouts and can produce a thicket. This suckering can cause a problem if this tree is planted in the wrong place. Natural habitat is in valley soils and low upland slopes. It is extremely hardy and does not do well in wet soil. It does best with some water. The New Mexico State Forestry Seedling Program suggests uses as a windbreak and for erosion control. Pests may include aphids, spider mites, and caterpillars. White flower clusters appear in spring before the leaves come out. The reddish fruit is edible and sour but reportedly good for jelly; of course, it attracts birds.

***Prunus besseyi*—Western Sand Cherry**—(Zone 3) This many-branched ornamental shrub grows between 4—6 feet high. Leaves are silver-green. It has pink to white flowers which produce ½ inch sweet black edible cherries which you might have to share with small animals and birds. It is tolerant of heat, cold, wind, and drought. Do not plant it in wet soils or near a watered lawn.

***Prunus cerasifera*—Purpleleaf Plum**—(Zone 5) This tree has dense purplish foliage. Growth is moderately fast to 20 feet with a 10 foot spread. This small tree has a life span of about 20 years. The bark splits on old trees. The pink flowers produce a sweet and bland edible 1-inch fruit in August. It is heat and drought tolerant but does best in well-drained soil with moderate water. It does not do well in compacted soils. PNM indicates this tree may be planted under power lines.

***Prunus cistena*—Purple Leaf Sand Cherry**—(Zone 3) This is a cross between *P. cerasifera* and *P. pumila* and grows to 9—15 feet high. It is one of the hardiest purple leafed plants. The pinkish-white flowers produce purple fruit in July--August. Water needs are moderate but the plant does not do well in wet soil.

***Prunus sargentii*—Sargent Cherry**—(Zone 4)—This tree grows to 45 feet high and wide. It is less susceptible to disease than other cherries. It is drought tolerant once established. It has pink flowers which produce small fruit which attract birds. In the fall, leaves are red-orange.

***Prunus tenella*—Dwarf Russian Almond**—(Zone 2)—This is a low shrub growing to less than 5 feet high and wide. It will grow in a variety of soils, including clay. It makes root suckers and will spread. It produces red flowers; cultivars have different colored flowers. ‘Ruth’s 100’ is fairly drought tolerant.

***Prunus tomentosa*—Nanking Cherry**—(Zone 3) This fast growing deciduous shrub or small tree grows to 10 feet tall. The leaves resemble rose leaves. It flowers in late April and produces edible fruit in the fall. Wildlife is attracted to this tree. It is cold and drought tolerant but will do best with some water and in soils which are not alkaline. It is susceptible to tent caterpillars. This shrub has been propagated by the New Mexico State Forestry Conservation Seedling Program.

***Prunus virginiana*—Western Chokecherry**—(Zone 2) This shrub or small tree can grow between 12—20 feet tall. It is native to the northern Rocky Mountains, Sierra Nevadas, and Great Basin area. The dark green leaves turn maroon and gold in the fall. Tiny 3—6 inch clusters of white flowers appear in spring, producing small red fruit in the fall. It has moderate to low water needs once established, and tolerates heat and some drought. It grows best in sandy-loam soils and can form a dense barrier because the roots produce suckers. It should not be planted over walkways where people will mash the fruit. It can be used as a windbreak, screen, or for riparian restoration because it will make a thicket.

***Purshia tridentata*—Antelope Bitterbrush**—(No zone found—it grows to 9000 feet altitude). This is a low evergreen shrub, with many spreading branches growing from 2—9 feet tall. It has stubby leaves with three notched tips. The shrub appears silvery because the leaves are wooly underneath. There are small yellow fragrant flowers in April through June which produce small hairy seed capsules. The plant fixes nitrogen in the soil and needs little supplemental water once established.

***Quercus gambelii*—Gambel Oak, Rocky Mountain White Oak**—(Zone 3) This native deciduous tree has a rounded crown and grows naturally in a thicket. The tree is slow growing and may reach 30 feet tall under ideal conditions. Leaves are shiny dark green with 7 to 11 deep lobes which turn yellow and red in the fall. Acorns are produced. It is drought tolerant once established. Do not dig up this tree because it is difficult to transplant successfully; get it from a reputable nursery.

***Quercus macrocarpa*—Bur Oak**—(Zone 3) This deciduous tree has heavy spreading limbs and a broad crown when mature. This is a slow growing and long lived tree, averaging 15 feet tall in 20 years and reaching 70—80 feet tall at maturity with a 60 foot spread. This tree may become too large for the average yard, but does well in parks. Leaves are dark green, turning dull yellow in the fall. This tree is adaptable to many soils but does best in limestone soils with moderate water. It is able to grow in dry clay soils. This tree is difficult to transplant. ‘Macrocarpa’ refers to the large 1—2 inch long acorn.

***Quercus muehlenbergii*—Chinkapin, Yellow Chestnut Oak**—(Zone 5) This deciduous tree grows between 40—80 feet tall and wide. Growth is moderate when young, slowing as the tree matures. In fall, leaves vary from yellow to brown. It is drought tolerant after it is established. It can grow in alkaline soils.

***Quercus turbinella*—Shrub Live Oak, Scrub Oak**—This native deciduous shrub has a many branched spreading crown and grows between 5—15 feet tall. It forms a thicket. The holly-like sharp-pointed leaves are colored bluish-green and have a dull yellow to brownish red underside. Its native habitat is mountain slopes and dry plains. This shrub needs little water once established. ‘Turbinella’ means “like a little turban,” referring to the cap of the acorn.

***Rhus glabra*—Smooth Sumac**—(Zone 3) This species is native to all 48 contiguous states. It is a large deciduous shrub or small tree growing to 15 feet high. It has an open crown with stout spreading branches. This leaves turns red in the fall and it has red berries which attract birds. It does well in poor soils and needs little water when established. It is heat and cold tolerant. It suckers by underground roots and has been used as a windbreak. ***Rhus glabra cismontane*—Rocky Mountain Sumac** is a smaller shrub, growing to 3—4 feet tall.

***Rhus trilobata*—Three-Leaf Sumac, Skunkbush Sumac**—(Zone 4) This native deciduous shrub grows up to 5 feet tall and wide. Growth is moderate to fast, depending on water. It has small yellow flowers in early spring, appearing before the leaves develop. The flowers produce tart lemon-flavored edible red berries. Leaves are divided into three leaflets that turn red-orange in the fall. Habitat is at the base of cliffs, canyons, ledges, dry hillsides and valley plains. It tolerates heat, cold, drought, and poor soil and needs no water once established. It will spread by suckering. It can be used for privacy screening or windbreaks. The stems were once used for basket weaving.

***Rhus typhina*—Staghorn Sumac**—(Zone 3) This deciduous small tree grows 15—20 feet tall with an equal spread. Branches are covered with velvety fine hairs. It has 1- to 20 toothed leaves which are green on top and grayish underneath and turn yellow to red in fall. There are greenish flowers in 4—6 inch clusters during June and July producing a red fruit which lasts all winter. This tree produces suckers and grows in poor and dry soils; it will not tolerate wet soils.

***Ribes* species:** This is a group of deciduous shrubs. Those without spines are called currants; those with spines are called gooseberries. They all grow in sun or part shade with moderate water. Two native *Ribes* are listed below:

***Ribes alpinum* ‘Aureum’—Golden Currant**—(Zone 2) This native shrub rapidly grows to 3—6 feet tall and wide. It has light green maple-like leaves which have three lobes, are glossy green and turn yellow-red in the fall. It produces many fragrant yellow flowers in early spring. The currants ripen in summer and turn purple-black when completely ripe. Both flowers and fruit are edible and attract birds. This cold-tolerant plant needs low to moderate water and tolerates a variety of soils. Natural habitat is plains, hillsides, and along creeks.

***Ribes cereum*—Wax Currant**—This native shrub grows to 4—6 feet tall. The bright green glossy leaves are divided into 11—23 lance shaped toothed leaflets that turn red in the fall. There are white flowers in upright clusters. The edible fruit is red, in conical clusters, and lasts into winter. It needs little supplemental water once it is established. Older canes and weak growth should be pruned out.

***Robinia x ambigua*—Flowering Locust**—(Zone 4) This is a pink flowering locust, (a hybrid of *Robinia pseudoacacia* and *R. viscosa*). The best-know variety ‘Decaisneana’ grows to 40—50 feet tall and 20 feet wide. ‘Idahoensis’—Idaho Locust—(Zone 3) grows moderately fast to 40 feet with bright pink flowers in an 8-inch cluster. ‘Purple Robe’ is similar to ‘Idahoensis’ but has purple-pink flowers that bloom 2 weeks earlier and for a longer time. These trees need little water once established. ***Robinia*** species tolerate heat. The bark, leaves, and seeds are poisonous and these locusts should not be planted where young children play. The fragrant flowers attract bees. The locust borer can be a problem. All *Robinia* have brittle wood and aggressive roots which produce suckers and should not be planted near a lawn or garden.

***Robinia neomexicana*—New Mexico Locust**—(Zone 3) This deciduous spiny shrub or tree has purplish fragrant flowers on racemes that are 2—4 inches long in April through June. This fast growing native can grow 24 feet tall with a 4-inch trunk. This plant forms thickets in moist soils on sunny banks along streams and is often used for erosion control. It needs water; plant it near a gutter—it is listed here because it is a New Mexico and Las Vegas native. The Hopis reportedly used parts of the tree as a remedy for rheumatism.

***Robinia pseudoacacia*—Black Locust, Common Locust**—(Zone 4) This is a deciduous upright tree which will develop into a spiny thicket from seeds as well as from roots. It is easily transplanted. With

favorable conditions and some water, it is fast growing, to about 45 feet high and 25 feet wide. It has dull dark blue-green leaves and brittle wood. It competes with and crowds out other plants because the roots will sprout and create a thicket. It has fragrant flowers on racemes 4—6 inches long and attract bees; it blooms in May through June and the seed pods look like peas. It does not tolerate shade. The bark and seeds are poisonous. Do not plant this where young children play. Pruning is recommended in late summer and fall. It is a legume and can fix atmospheric nitrogen into the soil, improving soil quality. It has been used for erosion control. ‘Purple Robe’ is a borer resistant cultivar. ‘Idaho’ withstands heat and cold extremes.

***Sheperdia argentea*—Silver Buffaloberry**—(Zone 2) This dense deciduous native shrub grows to 10 feet and is very hardy. It tolerates alkali soils, cold, and wind. The twigs, thorns, and narrow leaves are covered with shiny scales which make the plant seem silvery. It produces suckers and has been used for erosion control. If male plants are present, the female plants produce bright red berries which are tart but edible and also attract birds. It needs little water once established. Do not plant near lawns or other plants which are watered.

***Sheperdia rotundifolia*—Roundleaf Buffaloberry**—(No zone found. Grows to 8000 feet altitude) This silvery gray-green deciduous shrub grows to 3—4 feet tall. It has thick, nearly round leaves with white woolly undersides. The petal-less gray-green flowers produce woolly olive shaped fruit on the female plant which attracts wildlife. Water needs are low.

***Sophora japonica*—Japanese Pagodatree, Scholar Tree**—(Zone 4) This tree grows to 30—60 feet tall and wide. It provides light shade. After about 10 years white flowers appear in July. It tolerates poor soils and uses little water once established.

***Symphoricarpos albus*—Common Snowball**—(Zone 3) This deciduous shrub is fast growing to about 6 feet tall. It tolerates clay soil, polluted air, shade, neglect, and needs little water once established. It has oval light green leaves. The pink flowers in late spring produce white berries which last through the winter; berries attract birds.

***Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*—Indian Currant**—(Zone 2) This deciduous shrub resembles *S. albus*, above, growing between 2—5 feet tall in full sun. It can grow 4—8 feet wide due to long arching branches. It produces showy small purple fruit in clusters throughout fall and winter. Water needs are low.

***Symphoricarpos oreophilus*—Snowberry**—(Zone 2) This native deciduous shrub has light blue-green leaves. It will grow to 5 feet tall. It has small pink bell-shaped flowers in the late spring which produce white berries which stay on the shrub a long time. It needs little water and can grow in partial light shade. It does best in well-drained soil.

***Syringa vulgaris*—Common Lilac**—(Zone 3) This is a large deciduous shrub which will grow 15—20 feet high and wide. It needs full sun. The green heart-shaped leaves turn yellow in fall. There are fragrant lavender colored flowers in May which develop where the leaves join the stems. It is native to Southern Europe. It does well in alkaline soils. It may take 2 years after planting to produce blooms. It has low water needs but will need watering in drought conditions. After the flowers die back, it is recommended that dead and weak wood be pruned to the ground: do not over-prune or the following year’s flowers will be lost.

***Syringia rothomagensis*—Chinese Lilac**—(Zone 3) This shrub is smaller than Common Lilac and also needs some water after it is established.

***Tamarix chinensis*—Salt Cedar**—This Asiatic species is considered a noxious weed in the State of New Mexico because it is aggressive and kills native vegetation. Efforts are being made to wipe it out. Please do not plant it.

***Tilia tomentosa*—Silver Linden**—This deciduous tree will grow to 40—50 feet tall and 20—30 feet wide. Light yellow flowers appear in late June/July. The light green leaves are silvery underneath. It needs some water once established. It reportedly needs less water than other Lindens.

***Ulmus Americana*—American Elm**—(Zone 3) This large deciduous tree has an umbrella shaped crown. The medium green leaves change to yellow in the fall. Growth is rapid when the tree is young. It grows to 80—100 feet high and 60—80 feet wide. The tree is native to the eastern United States and was overplanted. Dutch Elm disease destroyed nearly all of these trees in the eastern and middle United states, leaving cities high expenses for dead tree removal. This is an example of why one species should not be planted in such high percentages; there should be many different kinds of trees. Because Dutch Elm disease continues to spread, it is not recommended for planting.

The cultivar of ***Ulmus carpinifolia***, ‘Sapparo Autumn Gold’ (Zone 3) is a relatively new hybrid and is said to be highly resistant to Dutch Elm disease as is another cultivar ‘Accolade’ (Zone 4—5). All Elms need regular water.

***Ulmus pumila*—Siberian Elm** (also incorrectly called Chinese Elm)—(Zone 4) This tree has been put on the New Mexico list of Noxious Weeds. It has weak and brittle wood, roots which heave sidewalks and get into the sewer lines and under building foundations. It is aggressive, crowding out many other plants. Please do not plant this tree.

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## Internet information

[www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/housing/treedefect/hazards.htm#what](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/housing/treedefect/hazards.htm#what) Site helps you inspect your trees for hazards.

[www.cmg.colostate.edu/gardennotes.shtml](http://www.cmg.colostate.edu/gardennotes.shtml) Colorado State University, Master Gardener Notes #633 Tree Planting and other information

[www.treesaregood.org](http://www.treesaregood.org) (International Society of Arboriculture) Benefits of Trees Pruning Young Trees and Proper Mulching Techniques are among the titles in the series Consumer Information Program.

[www.arborday.org](http://www.arborday.org) National Arbor Day Foundation Browse the tree Database. Some trees and plants listed as drought tolerant will not survive a prolonged drought.

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