Abington Township List of Recommended Plants
(last updated 8-4-2015)

PURPOSE

This document is intended to guide the Abington Township Shade Tree Commission and the Environmental Advisory Council in carrying out their duties as directed by the Abington Township Code.

The Abington Township code directs the Shade Tree Commission to

- Work with the appropriate township officials charged with the enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision Ordinance of the township regarding shade trees to help implement the provisions of those ordinances with respect to
  - The planting, removal, maintenance and protection of shade trees in the public streets and highways of the township.
  - The establishment and maintenance of buffer zones
  - The planting of shade trees in developments
- Contact owners of private property, where there is the possibility of shade trees being removed, to advise them of the desirability of retaining, altering or replacing such trees
- Work with other township officials and provide information to the public in order to encourage the planting and maintenance of shade trees on private property.
- Prepare and present to the Board of Commissioners such additional legislation as the Commission deems appropriate to promote the planting and maintenance of shade trees in the township.

The Abington Township Code directs the Environmental Advisory Council to

- Identify environmental problems.
- Recommend plans and programs to the appropriate agencies for the promotion and conservation of the natural resources and for the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment within the area of this municipality.
- Make recommendations as to the possible use of open land areas of this municipality.
- Promote a community environmental program
- Keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including but not limited to flood-prone areas, swamps and other unique natural areas.
- Advise the appropriate local governmental agencies in the acquisition of property, both real and personal.
- Undertake such environmental tasks as requested by the governing body of this municipality.
GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Selection of any tree or shrub should take into account
- The functions the tree or shrub is to perform
- Suitability to the growing site conditions (space, sunlight, water, soil)
- Size of tree or shrub at maturity, considering both height and spread
- Proximity to site features, (including overhead and underground wires, water lines, gas lines, sewer lines, walkways, signage, line of sight and property lines), and provision of adequate clearances
- Tolerance to salt if it is to be established near paved areas
- Susceptibility to invasive pests

Locally grown, native plants are preferred, but in many cases non-locally grown or non-native species are the only plants suitable for the urban environment. Plants are best purchased from local sources to maximize the potential for healthy establishment.

The introduction of invasive species, as defined by the PA DCNR, is prohibited.

The Shade Tree Commission maintains an inventory of public street trees, most recently updated in February 2014. This inventory should be referenced when selecting street trees with an eye for increasing diversity of street trees.

Canopy coverage, riparian buffers and rain gardens are essential for water quality and stormwater management, as well as habitat quality and public health.

PLANT LISTS

The following plant lists, courtesy of knowledgeable agencies who actively maintain them, should be referenced as applicable to each situation. Example uses of these lists are provided in the next section.

- Cornell University
  - Recommended Urban Trees: Tree Selection for Stress Tolerance
- Montgomery County Planning Commission
  - Planning By Design: Shading Parking Lots
- Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania Center for Urban Forestry
  - Checklist of Pennsylvania Native Trees
  - Invasive Species Fact Sheets
- Pennsylvania Department of Natural Resources (PA DCNR)
  - Common Trees of Pennsylvania
  - Landscaping with Native Plants
  - The Vermont Rain Garden Manual
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)
- PECO
  - Plant the Right Tree in the Right Place
- Pennsylvania State University Extension
  - Shade Tolerant Trees, Shrubs, and Groundcovers
  - Trees, Shrubs, and Groundcovers Tolerant of Dry Sites
The following detailed references are provide more detailed characterizations of trees and shrubs, and are extremely helpful in developing a landscape plan.

- Rick Darke and Doug Talamy, *The Living Landscape*
- Michael Dirr, *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*
- Henry Gerhold, Norman L. Lacasse and Willet N. Wandell, *Landscape Tree Fact Sheets*
- Harrison L. Flint, *Landscape Plants for Eastern North America*
- Virginia Department of Forestry
  - *Common Native Shrubs of Virginia Checklist and Identification Guide*
  - *Common Native Trees of Virginia Identification Guide*
- Virginia Tech University
  - *Tree Fact Sheets*

The Shade Tree Commission authors additional plant lists for homeowners as part of the annual “Let’s Talk Trees” educational series. These lists are available on the STC web site or by emailing abingtontrees@gmail.com.

**SAMPLE APPLICATIONS**

**Urban Tree Plantings (e.g. Street Trees)**

It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT that the planting site for a tree in an urban (or otherwise compacted or restricted setting) be carefully examined and, in turn, that a tree suited for its mature size and the growing conditions be selected. We recommend that references such as “Street Tree Factsheets” (Gerhold), “Landscape Plants for Eastern North America” (Flint) or “Manual of Woody Landscape Plants” (Dirr) be used to gain a better understanding of the specific requirements of each tree.

Investigate tree choices carefully. Hybrid varieties (name in single quotes) are often superior choices to non-hybrids. Certain selections may prove to be somewhat more costly and sometimes more difficult to find but are generally worth the effort. Choosing and planting a tree with care will provide functional beauty and enjoyment for your lifetime and beyond.

Choose trees that are highly tolerant to urban stresses. See:

- **Recommended Urban Trees: Tree Selection for Stress Tolerance**
- **Selecting Trees for Tomorrow’s Urban Forest** and related plant list
- **Tree Species for Metropolitan Areas**

If overhead wires are present, choose small trees or large shrubs. See:
For tight corridors, consider the use of fastigiate trees. The following selections establish well in our area:

- trees that grow to 45’ at maturity with up to a 15 foot spread:
  - Armstrong Maple
  - Columnar Tulip Tree
  - Musashino Columnar Zelkova
- trees that grow to 30’ at maturity with up to a 15 foot spread:
  - Palasade® American Hornbeam
  - Emerald Sentinel Sweetgum

Avoid trees that produce an undue amount of seeds or litter.

It can be more economical and less labor-intensive to select bare root trees for planting. Cornell University describes important factors in Creating the Urban Forest: The Bare Root Method. Two growers who harvest sizable bare root trees are:

- Schichtel’s Nursery Bare Root Plant Material
- JF Schmidt Reference Guide

**Parking Lot Plantings**

Many existing parking lots offer very small planting spaces. All the considerations listed above for street plantings related to urban stresses and tight corridors apply here.

The Montgomery County Planning Commission recommends that parking lots be modified or designed with adequate planting spaces in mind. See Planning By Design: Shading Parking Lots

**Screening and Privacy Plantings**

Guidance and plant lists for screening and privacy plantings can be found at the following sites:

- Using Trees and Shrubs for Privacy and Wind Screening
- A Guide for Selecting Shrubs for Pennsylvania Landscapes

**Riparian Buffer and Rain Garden Plantings**

Guidance and plant lists for riparian buffer and rain garden plantings can be found at:
Three watershed associations serve Abington Township, each of which offers extensive information about riparian buffer design and plant selection:

- Pennypack Creek Watershed Partnership
- TTF Watershed Partnership Inc.
- Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association

Special Site Considerations

Penn State Extension offers plant lists for sites with special challenges such as too much or too little water, lack of light, or steep slopes.

- Shade Tolerant Trees, Shrubs, and Groundcovers
- Trees, Shrubs, and Groundcovers Tolerant of Dry Sites
- Trees, Shrubs, and Groundcovers Tolerant of Wet Sites
- Planting on Steep Slopes

- Plant List- Abington Homeowner Tree List- September 2014
- 2015 08 Planting List- Working Format