

Shade Trees for Pinellas County

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During the summer when the heat is stifling, it's important to take advantage of shade when you are outdoors. If your yard has no shade trees you may not have much respite from the heat. Shade on your home and air conditioner may also decrease your energy costs in the summer. With all of these benefits you may be considering planting shade trees on your property. Planting a tree is a (hopefully) long-term commitment so you want to choose the right tree from the start.

If you choose an evergreen tree you will have shade year-round while deciduous trees will shade your house in summer but allow the sun to warm your house in winter when they lose their leaves. Evergreens on the north west side of the house will help to block winter winds too. You can plant shade trees at any time of year; just be sure to follow UF recommendations for proper planting practices. To learn more about these practices visit *Planting and Establishing Trees* at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP31400.pdf>.

Pinellas County is unique in several ways- most of us have smaller lots to work with, some have salt breezes from the water to contend with, and we all have wind storms. You may be wondering what shade trees can we plant here that will thrive in our unique environment? A favorite shade tree in our county is the **Live Oak**, *Quercus virginiana* (large tree, zones 8-11). Live oak is a great choice but grows very large- up to 40 to 60 feet in height with a 60 to 100 foot spread. It is drought and salt tolerant as well as wind resistant, which is why it's a popular choice if you have the room.



Sweetgum, *Liquidambar styraciflua* photo UF/IFAS



Sparkleberry, *Vaccinium arboreum* photo UF/IFAS

If you have a moist but well-drained site and space you could consider **Sweetgum**, *Liquidambar styraciflua* (large tree, zones 5b-10a) or **Sparkleberry**, *Vaccinium arboreum* (small tree, zones 7-10). These two choices are deciduous, so they will lose their leaves in winter when you would probably prefer more sun anyway. Their leaves also turn beautiful colors before they fall bringing seasonal color to your landscape. Sparkleberry has high wind resistance and sweetgum is considered to have medium-high wind resistance. Sparkleberry also flowers profusely if grown in full sun.

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Yaupon Holly,
tree and fruit,
Photo UF/IFAS



For a smaller property with drier conditions you might consider the following small trees, all of which are salt and drought tolerant and have high wind resistance: **Buttonwood**, *Conocarpus erectus* (small tree, zones 10a-11), **Simpson's Stopper**, *Myrcianthes fragrans* (small tree, zones 9-11), and **Yaupon Holly**, *Ilex vomitoria* (small tree, zones 7-10). These three choices are all evergreen and will provide year-round shade. All three of these choices can be grown as a large shrub or a small tree. Each of these have unique characteristics that take them beyond a simple shade tree: Buttonwood has a silver variety that has silvery leaves that shimmer in the sun and the wind, Simpson's Stopper has reddish, flaking showy bark and orange fruit that birds enjoy and Yaupon Holly produces beautiful red fruit in the fall and winter on the female plants (males must be present for fruit production).



Buttonwood, silver variety, *Conocarpus erectus*, Photo UF/IFAS

The right shade tree for you may not be on this short list, but remember to consider size, evergreen vs. deciduous, color, seasonal interest, and match growing conditions to your site conditions for the greatest chance of success. For more guidance with this and other **plant choices in your landscape** please visit the interactive plant selector Florida-friendly Plant Database at <http://floridayards.org/fyplants/>. For information on the **health and maintenance of shade trees** please visit: <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/maintenance.shtml>

*Northern Pinellas County is in zone 9b, central and southern Pinellas County is zone 10a.