

New trees from North Dakota State University

Made in Dakota

North Dakota is a land of *prairies*, not *forests*. Not many trees can survive in our harsh environment. Come to think of it, not many people can survive here either.

Landscapers in North Dakota are often forced to use trees that are considered “weeds” in other states. This includes poplars, aspens and boxelders—these are very weak and short-lived types.

There is a desperate need for hardy, long-lived, attractive trees for landscapes in our state.

This need is greater than ever today as the emerald ash borer looms over the horizon, threatening to kill one-third of the trees in North Dakota.

Superior landscape trees cannot be developed overnight. It can take decades from the time an experimental seedling is planted until it shows its value as a mature landscape tree.

Fortunately for us, tree specialist Dr. Dale Herman of North

Dakota State University started his work many years ago.

Dr. Herman quietly retired from his position at NDSU a few weeks ago. We owe him and his team of scientists our gratitude for their skills, persistence, and patience in developing superior trees and shrubs for our state.

Their efforts led to varieties perfect for us in North Dakota.

Dr. Herman’s work will certainly change landscapes in our state forever. The following is a quick summary of some of the introductions:

‘Northern Acclaim’ may be the hardiest honeylocust variety available today (see next page for photo). It grows fast, tolerates drought, and provides filtered shade to the landscape.

Honeylocust trees are prized in home landscapes throughout America and now we have one that can survive the northern prairie.

Among the hundreds of tree varieties available in America today, ‘Prairie Gem’ ornamental pear is one of the most promising, according to national authority Dr. Michael Dirr. ‘Prairie Gem’ has pure white flowers in spring, glossy green foliage in summer, and golden foliage in fall. Its resistance to fireblight is valuable as this is a major threat to pear trees in our state.

If you are looking for a special tree in a narrow spot, consider ‘Dakota Pinnacle’ Asian white birch (photo on page 3). Its white bark contrasts superbly with its dark green foliage in sum-

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Flowering pear

mer and its striking gold color in fall. This columnar-shaped tree is surprisingly tough—it tolerates drought, heat, strong winds, clay soil, and alkaline conditions.

Another birch, 'Prairie Dream', has the peeling white bark everyone loves. It's a stress-tolerant variety of paper birch from the Killdeer Mountains and shows tolerance to bronze birch borer.

'Prairie Statesman' Swiss stone pine looks like an amazing Christmas tree (photo on next page). Its needles and branches are exceptionally full—almost unreal. This pine is a hardy evergreen that keeps its emerald green color through the winter. It grows slowly—after 25 years you can expect the tree to be only 25 feet tall. This compact habit makes it ideal for urban landscapes. Swiss stone pine may be relatively unknown today, but surely will be a favorite tree in the future.

Alders grow fast, displaying glossy green foliage and lustrous

gray bark. Their purple catkins and clusters of brown strobiles (cones) add interest to the winter landscape. Alders prefer wet soils—'Prairie Horizon' stands out among alders for its superior tolerance to drought, making it adaptable to much of the state.

The leaves of 'Prairie Reflection' laurel willow are so shiny they reflect sunlight (hence the variety's name). Willows prefer moist soil, but I have seen a laurel willow at the Dickinson Research Station and it is thriving under the dry weather there. This native tree is 30-foot-tall, dense, and much less messy than weeping willows (photo on next page).

'Prairie Torch' Ohio buckeye grows faster than other buckeyes and has brilliant orange fall color. Its palm-shaped leaves fold downwards, adding a tropical touch to a landscape (photo below). This selection resists leaf scorch and you will be fascinated with its flower spikes in spring.

'Prairie Expedition' American elm was the only survivor of a cluster of elms that died of Dutch Elm Disease along the Wild Rice River near Fargo. This was not a fluke—lab tests verify this variety has good resistance to the deadly disease. Best of all, the branches of 'Prairie Expedition' show the beautiful umbrella habit of the American elm we all cherish.

'Prairie Radiance' euonymus winterberry is a small 10- to 15-foot tree that looks spectacular in the fall. Besides its pink fall foliage, the tree bears a prolific number of pink capsules that burst open to reveal bright red seeds (photo on next page).


'Copper Curls' Pekin lilac is another fine specimen plant. This small tree is notable for its showy, copper-colored peeling bark (photo on next page). It bears fragrant, creamy white flowers in spring.

Magnolias are beloved in springtime, and 'Spring Welcome' is one of the hardiest mag-



'Northern Acclaim' honeylocust (left) has an open habit; 'Prairie Torch' buckeye is ablaze in its fall color

nolias available. This variety displays deep green foliage and pink flower buds that open into clean white blooms.

There are also many shrubs developed by NDSU, including some of the finest forsythias, potentillas, and junipers for the north. For more information on all of the new introductions, please go to <http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/plantsci/breeding/woodydesc.htm>. 



NDSU tree introductions (from top left and clockwise): flaky bark of 'Copper Curls' Pekin lilac; red seed capsules of 'Prairie Radiance' euonymus winterberry; glossy foliage of 'Prairie Reflection' laurel willow; majestic appearance of 'Prairie Statesman' Swiss stone pine; and columnar habit of 'Dakota Pinnacle' Asian white birch.