

Comments on the New Street Tree List

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The Albany Tree Task Force, recently disbanded, was composed of three Parks and Rec commissioners and four public members. City Forester Tony Wolcott served as city liaison. The membership included homeowners, renters, seniors, a landscape architect with a design/build practice, a general contractor, two local arborists with more than 70 years of combined experience, and miscellaneous rabble. The revised List of Approved Street Trees is its final product.

This list is a balancing act of many considerations. No tree is a perfect street tree; this list attempts to provide a sustainable mix, with each tree being strong in some criteria. These include:

- Visual quality
- Maintenance requirements and cost, including pruning and the effects of roots on pavement and other hardscape.
- Allergenic trees. Allergy and asthma are both increasing, and a warming climate should make the problem even worse.
- Drought tolerance *and* tolerance of saturated soils. Both are equally important. Drought may be the more critical long term issue, but we actually lose more established trees to root diseases and decay. Our heavy clay soils with poor drainage make this a particularly difficult issue.
- Pests and Diseases. We gave more weight to potentially lethal pests and diseases than to those with basically cosmetic effects. To a limited degree, we also attempted to address the issue of new introduced pests and diseases
- Diversity. This includes genetic diversity and also diversity of size, form, and ecological functions.
- Climate Change. The future climate and weather are uncertain but partly predictable in broad outlines. We can reasonably expect droughts, very wet years with very strong storms, more intense and longer-lasting summer heat waves, etc., etc. Longevity, etc. etc. Longevity. The list includes both short-lived and long-lived trees; longevity is given greater consideration for those trees that get large at maturity.

SUMMARY COMMENTS ABOUT PROPOSED ADDITIONS TO THE LIST

- The greatest impact will be on those streets with 27" parking strips, which includes most of the city. This list has 22 approved trees, compared to 8 on the previous list.
- 3 native trees are on the list. Unfortunately, very few native trees perform well as street trees. The Task Force was well aware of the benefits of native plants, and of the public's desire to have more native trees. However, it is not responsible to promote native trees only to see them die.
- The genetic diversity is greatly increased. The existing inventory has high concentrations trees in the rose family (*Rosaceae*) and the myrtle family (*Myrtaceae*). All but one of the additions to the list are from other families.
- Most of the trees on this list are at least reasonably tolerant of drought once established. Many will do poorly if we have *extended* drought and water rationing.
- The visual impact will be greatest with regard to more fall color, and a greater variety of small and medium sized trees.
- Elms are back!! 'Liberty' and 'Frontier' are hybrid elms bred for resistance to Dutch Elm Disease.