

LANDSCAPING GUIDES AND INVASIVE SPECIES ERADICATION

Plant Selection Guide for Landscaping

Plant selection guides can help the public and site developers select plants for landscaping in development and redevelopment sites. These guides can also assist local plan commissions and staff when reviewing site plans and landscape plans submitted by developers. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, in consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin Extension, has developed plant selection guides with lists of plants that are suitable for, and available in, Southeastern Wisconsin.

Plants should be selected to achieve their intended purpose or function, such as contributing to sustainability through drought-tolerant landscaping or increasing groundwater recharge, and/or establishing a desired design theme or visual character. Prior to selecting plants for a specific location, site characteristics should be considered, including soil type, drainage conditions, hardiness zone, growing space, sunlight and water availability, wind exposure, salt exposure/plant tolerance, utility lines, traffic visibility, snow coverage and storage, expected foot traffic and compaction, among other site conditions that could affect the growth of plants. A variety of plants should be used to establish species diversity, which helps prevent the widespread loss of plants from disease and pest infestations.

The plant selection guides are divided into seven parts, consisting of deciduous trees, evergreen trees, deciduous shrubs, evergreen shrubs, ornamental grasses, groundcovers, and vines. Trees, shrubs, and ornamental grasses are further grouped by height. Both detailed and abbreviated versions are provided:

- ***A Plant Selection Guide for Landscaping in Southeastern Wisconsin***
[Detailed Version](#)
[Abbreviated Version](#)

In addition to the plant selection guides above, the Commission has developed lists of potential street trees and drought-tolerant plants suitable for the Region:

- ***Potential Street Trees for Southeastern Wisconsin***
[Detailed Version](#)
[Abbreviated Version](#)
- ***Drought-Tolerant Plants for Landscaping in Southeastern Wisconsin***
[Detailed Version](#)
[Abbreviated Version](#)

Considerations for Local Governments and Developers

Plants for a development site or area should be selected based on their intended purpose (for example, providing screening or providing areas for infiltration/groundwater recharge and other green infrastructure), to help establish a design theme for a development project, and/or achieve a desired neighborhood or community character. Interesting or creative landscape architectural details that use a diversity of plants in planting patterns integrated with other landscape features should be encouraged to avoid uncreative and monotonous landscape designs. Avoid spacing plants too far apart with excessively large gaps or the monotonous view of a long straight hedge consisting of only one or two types of shrubs that are not properly integrated as a part of a design theme.

As a general guide, trees and shrubs used for buffering or screening purposes should consist of the following minimum sizes:

- Deciduous shade trees and ornamental trees should contain a caliper size of at least two inches and 1.5 inches in diameter, respectively, which are measured at least six inches above the root system or ground level.
- Evergreen trees should be at least five to six feet in height.
- Deciduous and evergreen shrubs used to screen parking areas from public streets should be at least 18 to 24 inches in height and grow to obtain an overall screening height of at least three feet above the parking surface after three years. A minimum plant size of five to six feet in height is suggested for buffering between incompatible land uses. Smaller plants could be used if combined with other landscape measures, such as planters or berms, provided the desired degree of buffering or screening is achieved.

Deciduous trees selected for installation along streets should contain a caliper size of at least two inches in diameter, measured 4.5 feet (about chest height) above ground level. The over-use of one type of tree should be avoided. For more information on street trees, refer to the sources listed at the end of the tables of "Potential Street Trees for Southeastern Wisconsin" linked above.

Invasive Plants

Existing invasive plants should be properly removed and the use of such plants for landscaping should be avoided. Section 23.22, "Invasive Species," of the *Wisconsin Statutes* assigns the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources responsibility for establishing a statewide program to control invasive plant and animal species in the State. Chapter NR 40 of the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*, "Invasive Species Identification, Classification and Control," lists plant and animal species that are considered invasive and methods for their control. Section 66.0407, "Nuisance Weeds," of the *Statutes* provides further direction for the control of invasive species/noxious weeds, and also authorizes towns, villages, and cities to provide public notice regarding the control of noxious weeds in the community. Links to the Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Code are provided on the [Wisconsin State Legislature website](#) and links to best management practice manuals on invasive plants and proper eradication methods for four areas of concern are provided below:

1. [Best Management Practices for Preventing the Spread of Invasive Species by Outdoor Recreation Activities in Wisconsin](#)
2. [Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species \(A Field Manual for Foresters, Landowners, and Loggers\)](#)
3. [Wisconsin's Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species](#)
4. [Invasive Species Best Management Practices for Transportation and Utility Rights-of-Way](#)