

2024 Oklahoma Proven Selections

For years, Oklahoma State University has lauded themselves on selecting the trees, shrubs and plants that flourish throughout the state. Each year, their professionals select varieties that assist consumers with making the best choices for trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals for their gardens. The overall goal is to:

- Select plants that are tolerant of the conditions found throughout Oklahoma
- Use well-adapted plants that lead to greater gardening success
- Create environmentally friendly gardens

So, here we go . . .

Annual

Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor

This gorgeous zinnia starts the season with a bold vibrant red center ring surrounded by golden-yellow outer petals. As the season progresses, the aging flowers morph into soft, beautiful shades of apricot, salmon, and dusty rose to bring a plethora of color to the garden, all from one variety!

Trial garden visitors clamored over this floriferous and compact plant during the summer trials noting how well the plant continued to bloom new flowers over old so there was never a decline in the beauty presented by Profusion Red Yellow Bicolor. Does well in well-drained soil and is disease tolerant. Attracts pollinators. This bicolor beauty is also the recipient of the Fleuroselect Gold Medal award for performance in European trials.

Exposure: Full sun, part shade

Soil: Moist, well-drained

Hardiness: Use as an annual

Perennial

Narrow-leaf Ironweed (Vernonia lettermannii)

This beautiful, upright, clump-forming, herbaceous perennial is native to rocky outcrops, floodplains, and river scours in west-central Arkansas and adjacent areas of Oklahoma. These plants can reach about 2' tall with an equal spread. The leaves are thin, narrow, and finely textured. Flat-topped blossoming of bright purple flowers appears in mid to late summer. Hummingbirds, butterflies, and other pollinators are attracted to this flower. This perennial grows well in medium to dry, well-draining soils of average richness in full sun. It is tolerant of a variety of soil conditions, including hot, dry, rocky, and alkaline. Surprisingly, it also tolerates occasional flooding and even drought once established. It is a rugged perennial for fine texture in pollinator gardens, native plantings, slopes, rock gardens, and xeriscapes. 'Iron Butterfly' is a vigorous cultivar selected for its compact, densely mounding habit and showy, long-lasting display of purple blooms.

Exposure: Sun

Soil: Dry to medium moisture; tolerates drought, erosion, shallow-rocky

Hardiness: USDA Zones 4-9

Shrub

Harry Lauder's Walkingstick

This shrub is also known as the Contorted Filbert because of its curly, twisty stems and foliage. The contorted stems add curiosity to the garden, especially during winter once the leaves have fallen and the contorted branches are best observed. Fruits (nuts) are seldom produced. Florists love the unique stem. The growth habit is a round, multi-trunked shrub that can grow 8 - 10' tall. Plants are typically grafted onto non-contorted species and may succor. If the tree does succor, they need to be removed. Sometimes, the contorted form is grown on its own roots and creates contorted suckers. Cultivars have been developed including dwarf ones which are great for small spaces and containers:

'Red Dragon': maroon-colored leaves, reaches about six feet high & wide

'Red Majestic': maroon-colored leaves with a somewhat weeping habit

Exposure: Full sun to part shade

Soil: Medium moisture, average garden, avoid heavy clays

Hardiness: USDA Zones 3-9

Tree

Redbud

Cercis species, commonly called redbud, are found throughout North America, regions of Europe, and Asia. Many people consider the Redbud a small tree. However, it can grow up to 18 – 20 feet. Redbuds are an

attractive tree but can sometimes grow as a large multi-stemmed shrub. Its leaves are heart-shaped and the young, gray bark gray contrasts nicely with the bright magenta flowers that appear before the leaves in spring.

In wooded areas, Redbuds are often understory trees. It grows in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. However, in our hot summers, it does best in part shade. The eastern redbud, *Cercis canadensis*, is the Oklahoma State tree. There are many cultivars to select from, including the Mexican redbud and the Chinese redbud, which are also worthy small trees.

Exposure: Part shade is best, but can tolerate full sun

Soil: Prefers moist, well-drained

Hardiness: USDA Zones 4-9

Collector's Choice

Pawpaw Asimina triloba

Pawpaw an understory tree that is native to Canada and the eastern U.S. It grows in deep shade to full sunlight in moist, nutrient-rich forests. Pawpaw tolerates occasional wet or moist conditions but prefers good drainage and acidic soil.

Its flowers are purplish-brown and have both male and female parts but are self-incompatible. Two to three varieties should be grown closely together as they require cross pollination by insects other than bees. In late summer to early fall, edible, sweet-tasting, and custard-like fruit develop. Harvesting can be challenging because of competition from ambitious wildlife. The leaves turn a yellow color in the fall, thus adding visual interest. Pawpaw attracts butterflies, pollinators, small mammals,

and songbirds, making it a good addition to a butterfly, pollinator, or rain garden. This tree is an easy-to-grow fruit tree for a children's garden.

Exposure: Full sun to shade

Soil: Moist, well-drained, occasionally wet

Hardiness: USDA Zones 5-9