BRINGING COUNTRY BEAUTY TO THE CITY STREETS: BY ARTHUR HAY

Because the natural human being, whether primitive or civilized, responds to Nature's stimulus, it is a wise and right plan never to put ourselves wholly out of touch with her inspiring forces. For this reason, as well as for many others, we cannot too closely and intimately surround our metropolitan lives with the beauties which Nature makes it possible to transplant from her own reserves to our city streets. It would be hard to estimate readily the value which trees have in the metropolis, even over and beyond their important decorative and utilitarian service. We who must spend our lives in the city have the greatest possible need of the quickening and restoring power of Nature's beauty, and the streets in which most of us at least must pass a certain number of minutes a day, should become the chief means of keeping us in touch with the natural beauties which we cannot hope to incorporate in our homes and offices, and which we have here in America at least, so often, perhaps all unconsciously, sacrificed to our commercial activities. We should never allow our city streets to become merely highways to business centers, but should religiously hold them for avenues of beauty so that we may pass through them with pleasure, receiving that inspiration and stimulus for work which so often follows the sight of Nature's fresh loveliness.

Although it may not be possible to ornament and keep beautiful the busiest streets in a crowded metropolis, where every inch of space is demanded for the painful conditions of modern traffic, yet surely in our broad avenues and residential side streets and in the living quarters of the poor we can establish some cheering beauty by the careful planting of such trees as have the power to cope with city conditions and which will eventually reward us with spring, summer and autumnal beauty.

There are not, in fact, many trees that are actually adapted to city life. Many of those which grow most rapidly and blossom most quickly are short lived in proportion and often lacking in grace and unsuitable in city existence. Therefore, to gain the best results in the planting of city streets great care should be exercised in the selection of trees which will bring the utmost permanent value. So far as possible we should plan to have them harmonize with the surrounding buildings, and certainly we should select them with a view to vigor of constitution.

Deciduous trees are on the whole more suited for planting in city streets than are the evergreens, giving as they do the shade so needed in the summertime and in the winter permitting the sun to
CHEER, DRY AND WARM THE STREETS. TREES THAT BLOSSOM EFFECTIVELY IN THE SPRING SHOULD BE GIVEN DUE CONSIDERATION IN THE SELECTION FOR PLANTING, THOUGH, OF COURSE, THIS IS NOT AS IMPORTANT QUITE AS THE QUESTION OF AUTUMNAL COLORING. THE BEST TREES ARE THOSE THAT PUT FORTH THEIR FOLIAGE EARLY IN THE SPRING AND PROVIDE SHADE AND BEAUTY UNTIL FALL, THUS PROLONGING THE PERIOD OF THEIR USEFULNESS AND DECORATIVE CHARM.


SHADE TREES SUITABLE FOR STREET PLANTING COME UNDER FOUR GENERAL CLASSES: THE COLUMNAR, SUCH AS THE LOMBARDY POPLAR, IRISH JUNIPER AND RED CEDAR; THE CONE-SHAPED, SUCH AS THE SUGAR MAPLE, SWEET GUM, WHITE PINE; THE VASE-FORMED, OR SPREADING HEAD, AS THE AMERICAN ELM AND SILVER MAPLE; THE ROUND-HEADED FORM, SUCH AS THE CAROLINA POPLAR AND HORSE CHESTNUT. THE REDBUD OR JUDAS-TREE, THE MAGNOLIAS AND SIMILAR VARIETIES ARE EXCELLENT FOR USE ON LAWNS OR CITY SQUARES, BUT NOT SUITABLE FOR STREET PLANTING ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR SMALL SIZE AND HABIT OF GROWTH. IT IS BEST TO SELECT TREES FROM NURSERIES IN THE FALL, SO THAT THEIR FORM CAN BE FULLY DETERMINED, AND THIS IS ALSO A GOOD SEASON FOR TRANSPLANTING, FOR THE ROOTS CAN THEN BECOME ESTABLISHED IN NEW QUARTERS BEFORE FROST. THE TREES SHOULD BE WELL PRUNED, AND AFTER THE GROUND IS FROZEN A MULCH OF LEAVES ABOUT SIX INCHES DEEP (HELD IN PLACE BY BRANCHES, BUT WHICH ALLOW AERATION OF GROUND) SHOULD BE PUT ON. THIS WILL FURNISH HEAT, AND, BY PUTTING IT ON AFTER THE FIRST FROSTS, WILL PREVENT THE MICE FROM BUILDING NESTS IN, OR NIBBLING, THE ROOTS.

THE VASE-FORMED TREES, WHICH ARCH GRACEFULLY OVER THE STREET, AND OF WHICH THE ELM IS SO PERFECT A TYPE, ARE QUITE GENERALLY CONCEDED TO GIVE THE BEST EFFECT. THE AMERICAN ELM IS PREEMINENTLY THE STREET TREE OF THE OLDER TOWNS OF THE EAST AND MIDDLE WEST, AND RIGHTLY SO, AS IT IS BOTH RUGGED AND GRACEFUL. IT GROWS WITH UNIFORMITY, YET WITHOUT MONOTONY, SHOWS GREAT INDIVIDUALITY WITHOUT DEPARTING FROM TYPE, DEVELOPING IN AGE WHAT MIGHT ALMOST BE CALLED PERSONALITY. THE
The live-oak is an excellent shade tree for city streets in warm climates because of its beauty, hardiness and thick foliage.

The sugar maple adds great charm to village or town streets; it is interesting at all seasons, has a fine spread of branches, few insect enemies and gorgeous autumn coloring.
The Tulip tree is an attractive border for city streets, especially in the spring, but it is not as much used as some of the commoner trees because of the difficulty of transplanting. Once adjusted to a new soil its growth is extremely satisfactory.
THE MAGNOLIA GRANDIFLORA IS AN ESPECIALLY INTERESTING TREE GROWTH FOR SHADING AVENUES IN SOUTHERN CITIES: IT IS HARDY AND BEAUTIFUL IN BLOSSOM: IN THE NORTH IT WOULD REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE CARE.

THE NORWAY MAPLE IS A POPULAR SUBSTITUTE IN CITY STREETS FOR THE SUGAR MAPLE: IT STANDS METROPOLITAN LIFE BETTER, THOUGH ITS LEAVES DO NOT TURN TO QUITE SO GORGEOUS A COLOR IN THE FALL, AND IT IS SLOW OF GROWTH.
The locust tree grows well in the East and Middle West; it gives a peculiarly light and pleasant appearance to a street; its leaves come out a pale soft green and gradually deepen through the season to a rich green.

The luxuriant growth of this maple tree shows the advisability of wide planting along city streets, as the expansion of the branches would in the course of years easily absorb a fifty-foot space.
seclusion and beauty of Eastern academic cities, duplicated in some of the Middle West towns, have become historical in great part by reason of the magnificent elms which border the avenues and fill the yards and university grounds. These noble trees were planted when wood was burned, and they were well grown before coal smoke and gas made city conditions so difficult for flourishing tree life. Young trees nowadays must fight so many adverse conditions in cities that it seems unlikely they will ever reach the fine proportions of their stately ancestors. City life does not materially affect old trees, but stunts the growth of the young ones and deprives them of much of their grace and vigor.

That the fight against city life is a keen one is shown by the fact that elms in a city will shed their leaves fully a month in advance of their rural relatives, and that often the leaves turn brown and drop off with no color change, while those in the country will sometimes turn such brilliant shades of yellow that pilgrimages are made to the fields or clay knolls where their beauty is revealed in natural and unhampered perfection. The gypsy and brown-tailed moth have made serious inroads upon the health and beauty of the Eastern elms, but up to the present time they are unknown in the Middle West. Western horticulturists, knowing that they cannot hope wholly to escape the visit of these pests, are putting forth earnest efforts to discover some method of extermination. The European elm, though hardy, is stiff, lacking the graceful arching character of the American elm. The hackberry, a fine large tree, so like the elm that it is often mistaken for it, is subject to attacks of a fungus that causes an unsightly growth of twigs.

The silver maple, another of the Vase-formed type of tree, is excellent for planting in city and town streets, it is quick growing, long lived, graceful and not expensive to start. It is apt to be attacked by the cottony maple scale, a scourge which is, however, easily overcome by spraying. The wood is brittle and weak, so the symmetry of a tree is often ruined by wind or sleet storms which, while breaking off large branches, do not kill it. Its autumn foliage is not very brilliant and its leaves curl up and drop quickly. This tree was formerly extensively used, but is now being supplanted by the Carolina poplar, which is cheaper, grows even more quickly and propagates easily. It is not so shapely or fine a tree as the maple, has little character or individuality, and therefore, makes a monotonous, uninteresting avenue, as artificial looking as a building made of cement blocks. But it has few insect enemies, will flourish where soft coal smoke is constant, and will resist the city conditions of tight pavements and gas permeated soil that are so fatal to the majority of trees.
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It is probably short lived, as are most soft wood trees, a fact to be borne in mind in planting city streets.

The sugar maple is charming at all seasons, has a fine spread of branches, few insect enemies, is long lived (being still youthful at seventy years of age) and has a wonderful display of autumn coloring, the gorgeous yellow, orange and scarlet foliage remaining several days after turning. No tree is to be compared to it as a border for an avenue, but unfortunately it is not very tolerant of city life, reaching perfection only in towns or villages or in the country. The Norway maple is the popular substitute for the sugar maple, because it stands city life better, but its darker foliaged leaves are not so gorgeous in the fall and it is of equally slow growth. The red maple flourishes in the North and East, but finds the Middle West less congenial.

The sweet gum does not thrive in the north Central States, but is one of the most vigorous and striking trees when grown in the latitude of Missouri, southward, and in the Mississippi Valley, where it makes as gorgeous an appearance as the sugar maple. It is especially fine in the fall, when in addition to the yellows, oranges and scarlets of the maple, it puts on marvelous purples and bronzes, often displaying all these colors on a single tree. There is an avenue of sweet gum trees in Lower Grove Park, St. Louis, one-half mile long and one hundred feet wide, now about eighty feet high, that cannot be equaled in the world for gorgeous and impressive beauty when in autumnal dress, and this effect could be duplicated in any Southern city. The gum tree is pleasing in the summer on account of its glossy leaf and interesting in winter because of the peculiar bark wings that are then revealed on the twigs and small branches.

Nearly all the oaks seen in city streets are of the red oak family. They are the fastest growers, they vigorously resist diseases and pests, thrive well in a poor soil, and the autumnal red and mahogany foliage hangs on the tree often for several weeks.

The white, chestnut and burr oaks are fine trees, but not suitable for city use, for they grow slowly and are not easily transplanted. The pin oak is shapely and graceful and does well in suburban localities where it can have a fairly moist soil.

In the olden days people went to the creeks and river bottoms and transplanted trees for their streets, but now they must go to a nurseryman who, alas, most often advises them to buy stock that is easily propagated in nurseries, and the fine old trees, relics of other days, that occasionally may be seen in our streets clasping the soil with massive roots like giant fingers, having the rugged dignity of
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the backwoodsman, are generally sacrificed to the unfortunate insanity of city improvement committees, who hew them to the ground, and replace them with symmetrical young striplings that in comparison look like foolish upstarts.

The Lombardy poplars are great favorites with street landscape gardeners, for their Columnar form gives a needed variety to parks and avenues. They are cheap, but cannot be counted on for more than twenty years of growth and are apt to winter kill. Some misguided folk "top" these trees about twenty-five feet from the ground, which causes them to grow to a round crippled head, a process which strangely enough is called decorative.

There are streets in Salt Lake City laid out on the generous scale permitted in the days of eighteen hundred and forty-eight (one hundred and thirty-two feet wide and blocks six hundred and sixty feet long) bordered with poplars which have grown to a height of one hundred feet, because climatic conditions are similar to their native Lombardy. They are green, pliant and so supple that when the heavy storms blow they sway like long plumes, bending under the rush of winds like a field of wheat—a wonderful sight. The white or silver poplar has all the faults of the species, namely too much cotton, weak wood, short life and in addition it throws out a perfect thicket of suckers which ruin the lawns, ditches, sewers or streets nearby.

The sycamore does better under adverse city conditions than any other tree except the Carolina poplar, though its white mottled bark is not as pleasing in city streets as in its native haunts. The American and European sycamores are called by nurserymen the American and European plane. The former is apt to have a fungous growth which causes the leaves to drop off in midsummer, but the latter is free from this disease. Its bark is less white and its leaves are darker than the American variety, so that on the whole it is considered a better tree for city use. The Oriental plane is common on the boulevards of Paris, but does not thrive on the narrow side streets, for it needs air and roomy quarters. Our native sycamore is hardy under city conditions and is long lived and inexpensive, but is apt to develop with age an oddity of growth, sending out a long branch far to one side, outbalancing the head, which is decidedly unattractive in a street, though finely picturesque by the side of winding streams.

The round-headed linden is an excellent tree for city planting, for its leaves are able to throw off the soot that is so deadly to the hairy-leaved group. The honey locust grows well in most places of the
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East and Middle West, and on account of its delicately pinnate leaves which come out pale soft green and gradually deepen to a rich dark color, it gives a peculiarly light and pleasing appearance to a street. The type has the trunk covered with long jagged thorns, but a thornless variety (Inermis) which should be chosen for street planting, may be obtained from the nurseries.

The gingko, though not native to America, is rapidly becoming acclimated, claiming attention as a tree of importance. It is interesting because its leaves resemble the maidenhair fern. When young it grows in Columnar form, but on reaching maturity, the lateral branches droop, and more and more its growth resembles the oak. Unfortunately for street use, its fruit when crushed under foot releases a disagreeable odor. The tulip, straight, clean and refined in appearance, grows moderately well, though it is not much used because of the difficulty of transplanting. It requires great care the first few years. After that it becomes hardy and puts forth a profusion of beautiful greenish and slightly reddish blossoms. The cucumber tree (magnolia acuminata) is frequently used to good advantage in adding variety to parks. The horse chestnut or buckeye is of rather slow growth, with showy blossoms that make it of value in parks and in the country, but is not to be depended upon for city planting. It is a sure prey to the tussock moth, which frequently defoliates whole avenues, so that the street looks as if swept by fire. The white ash is approved of by some authorities for use in city parks, as is also the golden rain and European and copper beech. In the South the magnolia grandiflora is undoubtedly the best for shade, beauty and hardiness, though the live-oak is a close rival. Evergreens are rarely used in the Middle West and only in special cases in the East, mainly because of their funereal and gloomy appearance and their usual association with cemeteries.

City streets should never be planted with horticultural freaks and botanical monstrosities such as the catalpi bungei, which looks like a balloon on a stick, or the weeping varieties of elm, ash, etc., which remind one of rheumatic mendicants with distorted and twisted limbs. The beauty and variety in the natural species of tree not only please the most exacting taste, but bring rest and peace to the jaded metropolitan spirit, a far more desirable achievement than to pique interest in Nature’s abnormal possibilities.