



Trees for Medians in Tennessee

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Median trees are street trees that must fit in a confined space between paved traffic lanes. These trees usually endure harsh site conditions associated with medians. The soil can be compacted, composed of unconsolidated fill material or lacking the top soil that was scraped off during construction activities. These soils may be excessively drained because of the convex shape of the land or poorly drained from a concave form. Medians also have limited space for tree roots to grow and expand.

In addition to the limited rooting space of medians, the above-ground portions of the tree must be restricted in size and shape so as not to obstruct the view of pedestrians or drivers. An upright, vasselike or oval crown form is preferred. Those with weeping, rounded, spreading and pyramidal forms should be avoided. Most trees should also withstand air pollution from vehicles. Tolerance to salt is desirable in areas where salt is used to de-ice roads.

Several species of trees may be planted in medians. Although planting one species will provide some uniformity, planting several species or kinds of trees increases diversity and lessens the chance of catastrophic loss of one species from insects or disease.



Wayne Clatterbuck

A sycamore tree that has outgrown a narrow median.

- Trees selected for planting in medians should:
- survive harsh soils and confined growing space
 - have a crown form that will not obstruct views from drivers or pedestrians
 - have few insect and disease problems
 - tolerate increased levels of air pollution
 - not require excessive maintenance
 - be tolerant of road salt



Wayne Clatterbuck

An example of proper planting and species choice along a walking path.



Donna Fare

View of intersection obscured by median plantings.

Listed below are a few tree species that are recommended for median plantings in Tennessee. Make sure to ask for and obtain the correct cultivar or variety. Many of these trees have been cultivated to provide an upright crown form that is preferred for medians and other landscape purposes.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Upright Form	Road Salt Tolerance	Tolerates Harsh Conditions*
<i>Acer rubrum</i> 'Armstrong'	Armstrong Red Maple	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Acer saccharum</i> 'Goldspire'	Goldspire Sugar Maple	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Amelanchier</i> x <i>grandiflora</i> 'Cumulus'	Cumulus Serviceberry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> 'Fastigiata'	Fastigate Hornbeam	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Celtis laevigata</i>	Sugar Hackberry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> 'Dawyck Purple'	Dawyck Purple Beech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
'Fastigiata'	Fastigiata Beech	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	Green Ash	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i> 'Fastigiata'	Fastigiata Ginkgo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
'Lakeview'	Lakeview Ginkgo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
'Princeton Sentry'	Princeton Sentry Ginkgo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i> var. <i>inermis</i>	Thornless Honeylocust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hawthorn spp.	Hawthorns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	Eastern Redcedar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Koelreuteria paniculata</i>	Golden Raintree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweetgum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> 'Little Gem'	Little Gem Magnolia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	Sycamore	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Prunus caroliniana</i>	Carolina Laurel Cherry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Prunus cerasifera</i> 'Atropurpurea'	Purple-Leaf Plum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i> 'Capitol'	Capitol Pear	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Quercus robur</i> 'Fastigiata'	Skyrocket English Oak	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	Baldcypress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	Littleleaf Linden	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ulmus parvifolia</i>	Lacebark Elm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Harsh conditions include: restricted rooting space, narrow growing space and city environments.

Yes No
 ? Literature indicates conflicting opinions.

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