

# TREES for Today's Gardens

Trees bring life and beauty to any garden but, particularly when space is limited, we need to think carefully before deciding what to plant. Luckily, modern breeding has added generously to the range of trees suitable for town-sized gardens. Many of today's new and improved varieties combine a whole host of desirable attributes on just one small tree – colour, perfume, long flowering, disease resistance and close compact growth.

Weeping crabapple (*M. floribunda*) is an all-time favourite with its pink and white spring blossom and perfect proportions, but crabapples are also grown for their stunning displays of fruit. New release, *Malus* 'Snowbright' has white flowers and bright orange-red fruit. Bred especially for tight spaces, Ballerina apple trees form tidy upright columns with close-packed leaves, flowers and fruit. *Malus* Ballerina 'Maypole' has dark green leaves, deep purple summer fruit and bright pink spring flowers.

Flowering cherries and magnolias are prized for their breathtaking flower displays in winter and spring. The very compact *Magnolia* 'Genie' produces dark burgundy flowers from early spring til mid summer.

If you love ginkgo's but never thought you had space, think again! *Ginkgo* 'Jade Butterflies' is a superb compact form, half the size of a regular ginkgo, with thick, close packed leaves turning brilliant gold in autumn. Another spectacular foliage tree is graceful *Cercis* 'Forest Pansy' with dark heart-shaped leaves. *Cercis* 'Texas White' sports shiny, dark green leaves and clusters of crisp white flowers on a compact, tiered tree. Robinia 'Tropical Splash' is an outstanding new form of the ever-popular yellow 'Frisia'. Twisty *Robinia* 'Lace Lady' is perfect for tight spaces or containers. *Cornus* 'Eddie's White Wonder' produces showy white flowers and stunning autumn foliage.

Many NZ natives suit the smaller garden. Kowhai are loved for their bright, bird attracting winter flowers. *Sophora fulvida* is a distinct species from Auckland's west coast which forms a small upright tree with a mass of late winter bloom. *Sophora* 'Sun King', from Chile, is extremely free flowering and compact.



## Choosing a tree

- Choose a tree that will do well in your location. Trees vary widely in their ability to cope with wind, frost, humidity, drought or wet soils.
- The height given on a label is usually a ten-year average. In a warm rainy climate with near perfect soil, your tree may reach that height in half the time.
- Investing in a large grade 'instant landscape' tree makes sense if your timeframe is short.
- Impatient gardeners should bear in mind that the fastest growing trees may be short lived, or require lots of trimming.
- Deciduous trees provide summer shade, but allow valuable winter sunshine to penetrate the house and garden.
- A spectacular show of flowers or berries is highly desirable but a tree's shape and its foliage are just as important, as these are on show for most of the year.

## Small garden trees

### Deciduous

- Acer** (Japanese maples)
- Cercis 'Forest Pansy'**
- Cotinus** (smoke bush)
- Cornus** (dogwood)
- Ginkgo 'Jade butterflies'**
- Magnolia stellata**
- Magnolia 'Genie'** (and other small growing hybrids)
- Malus** (flowering or fruiting crab apple)
- Prunus** (flowering cherry)

## Evergreen

- Ackama** (makamaka)
- Agonis** (willow myrtle)
- Camellias**
- Citrus**
- Conifers**
- Guava**
- Hoheria** (lacebark)
- Hymenosporum** (Australian frangipani)
- Magnolia 'Little Gem'**
- Michelia 'Fairy Magnolia'**
- Sophora** (kowhai)