



PLANT YOUR 'REMEMBER TREE' TO MARK UNPRECEDENTED PERIOD IN HISTORY



BY LORI DRAZ

These last months have been nothing less than extraordinary. Families have come together again, rediscovering a lot about what matters most. For many, this was a time to reconnect with the glorious gifts of nature and neighborhoods.

The Journal is proud to invite you to mark this once-in-a-lifetime experience by planting a "Remember Tree," as a way of marking this time together. Planting and caring for a tree are great activities to do together that will remind you of the strong roots and spreading branches of your family. To make it even more special, you may wish to create a time capsule. Have each family member document the experience with stories, pictures and artwork that you can share with future generations or new homeowners.

To help you choose a tree that will flourish, be attractive and live long, we have turned to the experts, the Shade Tree Commission (STC) officials. Shade Tree Commission officials devote their time voluntarily to protect, care and promote trees in the public domain, including streets, parks and town-owned property.

Stephen Barrett, Chairman of the Rumson Shade Tree Commission, was tremendously instrumental in the development of this article. He worked with the other town representatives to secure their recommendation of trees, including Rumson Shade Tree Committee member T. Burke Honnold, who made the Rumson selection of the American Yellowwood, *Cladratis kentukea*.



AMERICAN YELLOWWOOD IN THE FALL

AMERICAN YELLOWWOOD IN THE SPRING

"Yellowwood is a gorgeous, medium-sized, native tree with an elegant branching pattern," Honnold said. "The spring flowers, fall foliage and smooth bark make it attractive year-round. This tree is not to be missed in late spring when it is dripping with intensely fragrant, drooping clusters of white, pealike flowers which resemble white wisteria. During the summer, its compound leaves are bright green, and in the fall they become an attractive golden-yellow that contrasts handsomely with the smooth gray bark. This low maintenance, round-shaped tree flourishes in full sun and partial shade. It's a tough tree that prefers moist, well-drained sites. However, it is tolerant of poor soils, wet and dry conditions and moderately tolerant of road salt and salt spray. Yellowwood trees are best used for shade and as specimens. The Yellowwood is an uncommon find in the landscape and is one of the rarest trees in the eastern United States. Adding one to your property would be a wonderful choice."



STAR MAGNOLIA IN THE WINTER

STAR MAGNOLIA IN THE SPRING

Our next selection comes from avid gardener Karen Berger, a longtime Middletown resident and member of the Monmouth County Shade Tree Commission. Berger's loves of trees is evident in her poetic description of her choice, the Star Magnolia.

"There is nothing more reliable and steady than Mother Nature who moves forward in her unending daily cycles, sharing beauty and wonder with all who take the time to see it," Berger said. "We lived through months of turmoil and disruption, but nature helped to ease out collective uneasiness. Nature allowed us to see progress even when time felt like it was standing still as the birds began to reappear and the buds began to swell. In Middletown, we are fortunate to have a slightly earlier growing season than the rest of the state due to our proximity to the coast. This tiny bonus has made early spring bloomers some of my favorites. A wonderful early bloomer is the Star Magnolia, *Magnolia stellata*. It is a hardy magnolia that has showy 3- to 4-inch white flowers that smell so fresh. I like it as a single specimen planting around a patio or deck. It will only grow to about 15 to 20 feet. After a few weeks, usually after a windy spring rainstorm, the flowers fade and drop, and its dark green leaves emerge. The Star Magnolia loves a daily dose of full sun for four to six hours to produce the best, showy flowers. It adapts nicely to our slightly acidic, rich soils. You can add daffodils and tulips underneath to make the display even better and, later in the season, some shade-loving plants. Having plants and trees that bloom each year is rewarding and fun! I can think of no better way to commemorate our milestones than to plant a tree!"



RED HORSECHESTNUT FALL

RED HORSECHESTNUT SPRING

William Gerth is the chair of the Borough of Shrewsbury's Shade Tree Commission and is a member and secretary of the Monmouth County Shade Tree Commission. Shrewsbury is a town with an active garden club and community garden. Gerth selected a tree that also puts on a springtime show, the

Red Horsechestnut, *Aesculus x carnea*. This tree is such a favorite that you can find a beautiful Red Horsechestnut growing near the gazebo at the Borough of Shrewsbury's municipal complex. The STC planted it years ago in memory of Hazel Laurino.

"I love the Red Horsechestnut," Gerth said. "It is a beautiful tree that offers lovely shade. The Red Horsechestnut is thought to be a cross between the Common Horsechestnut, *Aesculus hippocastanum*, and the Red Buckeye, *Aesculus pavia*. It is a tree that is easy to remember and one that triggers memories. It is considered both an ornamental and shade tree that grows 30 to 40 feet in height with a matching spread (width) and a broadly rounded shape. The Red Horsechestnut has few pest or disease issues. In fact, it is less prone to leaf scorch and leaf blotch than *Aesculus hippocastanum*. Each May, it explodes with beautiful, rose-red flowers, a favorite snack for hummingbirds and bees who love to feed on the flower's nectar. It has palmately (hand-like) compound leaves typically with five dark green leaflets. The bark is gray-brown, becoming platy as the tree ages. The Shade Tree Commission provides shade trees to residents in Shrewsbury. We point to this tree as an example of a wonderful tree to consider."

Over in Colts Neck, Vito Viola, chairman of the Colts Neck STC, has chosen the Northern Red Oak, *Quercus rubra*, which is also recognized as the New Jersey State Tree.

"It is a North America native, most often found in the eastern and central United States, but is also present from southeast and south-central Canada, proving it is a comfortable in many conditions," Viola said.



NORTHERN RED OAK

"The Northern Red Oak can grow up to 140 feet or more and can age more than 400 years old. The Northern Red Oak is easy to identify by its bark, which features ridges that appear to have shiny stripes down the center. The leaves are 7- to 9-inch oblong leaves tapering gradually from broad bases. Select a planting space carefully

so the tree won't interfere with buildings or power lines. As a general rule, allow at least 20 feet in each direction. Be sure the tree is exposed to at least six hours of direct sunlight every day. It grows in even the worst conditions and performs well, despite poor soil, wet sand or urban air. Simply plant it, then have fun watching its effortless growth. The Northern Red Oak grows more than 2 feet every year and lives for centuries. This is a great tree to plant and enjoy watching while you honor the great state of New Jersey."

Holmdel does not have a Shade Tree Commission, so Ivan Pinhas stepped up to select the Heritage Birch. Pinhas grew up in Holmdel and studied horticulture at the Monmouth County Career Center. In 1988, he worked at Deep Cut Gardens before eventually starting Naturally Green Landscaping. He sat on the advisory board for the horticulture class at the Monmouth County Career Center.



HERITAGE BIRCH IN THE FALL



HERITAGE BIRCH BARK

"The Heritage Birch, *Betula nigra cully*, is a highly ornamental tree," Pinhas said. "The tree, as many birches, seem to shine and glow. With this selection, it's all about the bark, which curls and peels to reveal creamy white, cinnamon and salmony, pink shades. That incredible bark is so fascinating that many homeowners even add uplighting to show off its unique patterns day

and night. It has shiny, dark green leaves that sway in the slightest breeze. Those leaves turn a clear golden-yellow in fall. It is a quick growing tree and young trees can add as much as 3 or 4 feet in a single season! It grows in full sun or partial shade and is rarely bothered by deer. The Heritage variety is also more insect- and disease-resistant than other Birch varieties. It's a care-free, hardy tree that works with all kinds of architecture and exteriors. It's also a favorite habitat tree for some butterflies and numerous birds who maintain residences in its tall, leafy branches throughout all seasons. The Heritage Birch is sure to be a source of year-round interest in your yard."

This esteemed panel agreed on a few more choices that are worth adding to your landscape.

The American Holly, *Ilex opaca*, is one of the most iconic trees - the symbol of Christmas. Rumson is home to some remarkable vintage holly trees, but this regal tree with its leathery green leaves and bright red berries is a welcomed addition everywhere.



AMERICAN HOLLY

This species is easily identified. This is the tree whose berry-laden boughs are on display at Christmas time, decking the halls. Hollies also used to be considered protective trees that were planted near buildings to protect them from witchcraft and lightning.

These attractive, broad-leaf evergreen trees grow 15 to 50 feet tall. They add great depth to landscapes and are popular with all kinds of critters, especially birds who are wild about the juicy, red berries. It is important to know that the American Holly is dioecious, meaning these plants are either male or female. It is the female that produces the red berries. It typically takes five years or more to tell if you have a female, so if you want the red berries, be sure to select an identified female from the nursery or start your own family by planting a male and female.



KOUSSA DOGWOOD IN THE FALL

KOUSSA DOGWOOD IN THE SPRING

Another favorite of the team is the Koussa Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*. This is a small wonder that starts growing upright but expands into a cozy canopy as it matures. The Koussa is a hardy, disease-resistant dogwood with a lovely, peeling bark. In late spring, it explodes with a shower of four-pointed white blossoms. In the fall, the leaves turn a deep, rich red. It is perfect for a small space or placed in front of taller trees. It requires little pruning or care and is deer-resistant. The Koussa Dogwood will become more beautiful with each passing year.

Do something good for the environment and plant your Remember Tree. Don't forget to send the photos to TheJournalNJ@gmail.com so The Journal can check out your hard work!

We sincerely thank all the contributors. For more information, utilize the following resources. In Rumson, contact the STC through RumsonNJ.gov. In Middletown, contact Monmouth County Shade Tree Commission member Karen Berger at karen.lynn.berger@gmail.com. In Shrewsbury, you can contact the STC through ShrewsburyBoro.com. In Colts Neck, contact stc@coltsneck.org. Visit the Monmouth County Shade Tree Commission at Visit-Monmouth.com.