

2025 West Polk SWCD Tree Guide

Tree/Shrub Species	Growth Rate	Mature Height	Soil pH	Tolerance	Comments
Western Sand Cherry	Medium-Fast	4-6'	5.0-7.5	D-sh-S	Small suckering shrub produces larger, sweeter fruit than chokecherry. Hardy and adaptable, but prefers good drainage.
Redosier Dogwood	Fast	7-10'	5.0-7.5	W-d-SH-S	Coarse, spreading shrub with red branches. Great snow fence for wet areas. Flowers, berries, browse and cover for wildlife.
American Hazelnut	Medium-Fast	6-12'	5.0-7.5	w-d-SH-s	Large, suckering shrub adapted to many conditions and soil types. Nuts, catkins and browse favored by countless species.
Common Lilac	Medium-Fast	6-10'	5.5-8.0	D-S	Medium-large, suckering shrub with attractive, fragrant flowers. Great snow fence for dry sites. Dense wildlife cover.
Highbush Cranberry	Medium-Fast	10-14'	5.0-7.5	W-d-sh	Large, upright shrub. Add to multi-row windbreaks for wildlife value. White flowers in spring and red berries in fall.
Black Chokeberry	Slow-Medium	3-8'	6.0-8.0	W-d-sh-S	Compact, suckering shrub for wet sites. Dense growth creates good snow fences and wildlife cover. Berries for jellies and birds.
Flame Willow	Fast	15-20'	4.5-8.0	W-d-s	Huge, attractive shrub glows orange in winter sun. Windbreak workhorse for wet sites. Early season pollen source for bees.
Manchurian Apricot	Fast	10-20'	6.0-7.5	d-sh	Small, suckering tree flushes showy, pink/white flowers before leaves in spring. 1.5" fruit is good for drying and preserves.
Common Chokecherry	Medium-Fast	12-25'	5.0-8.0	w-D-S-SH	Suckering tree with fragrant flowers and black berries. Excellent wildlife habitat. Tasty fruit for jelly and wine. Very adaptable.
Dolgo Crabapple	Medium	25-35'	6.0-7.0	w-d-s	Very large crabapple tree produces delicious 1.5" fruit that ripen early for fall wildlife. Long bloom window for pollinators.
Midwest Crabapple	Medium-Fast	20-30'	6.0-7.0	w-d-s	Large crab retains low branches to stop snow. Dense habit and tiny, persistent fruit for nesting/migrating/overwintering birds.
Gambel Oak	Slow-Medium	15-25'	6.0-7.5	D-sh-s	Hardy tree grows reliably on light, dry soil. Spreads via root suckers to provide wind protection, habitat, browse and acorns.
Prairie Red Plum	Medium-Fast	10-15'	5.5-7.5	w-d-sh-S	Small, suckering tree with showy white flowers and delicious fruit. Larger fruit and less suckering than American Plum.
Serviceberry	Slow-Medium	10-20'	5.5-7.5	d-SH-s	Upright suckering tree produces purple berries in early summer (if you can beat the birds!). Performs best with good drainage.
Basswood	Medium-Fast	50-60'	5.5-7.5	w-SH	Large, fast-growing shade/windbreak tree. Huge nectar source for bees. Shade-tolerant replacement tree for aging windbreaks.
Boxelder	Fast	30-60'	5.0-7.5	W-d-sh	Tough, imperfect tree provides perfect habitat for owls, woodpeckers and kestrels. Persistent seeds feed winter wildlife.
Siouxland Cottonwood (male)	Fast	70-100'+	4.5-8.0	W-d-s	Seedless selection from NDSU has narrower crown than native cottonwood - better function for windbreaks.
Common Hackberry	Medium-Fast	40-60'	6.0-8.0	W-D-S	A jack (or better) of all trades that will grow almost anywhere. Tasty, nutritious fruit is loved by wildlife.
Bur Oak	Medium	50-80'	5.5-8.0	D-sh-s	Extremely durable tree. Provides wildlife habitat and nutritious mast for deer and turkeys. An investment for your land.
Prairie Sky Poplar	Fast	60-80'	5.5-7.5	W	Similar to Norway poplar with narrower crown. Can be planted denser. Less likely to shade neighbors. Quick wind protection.
Black Walnut	Medium	50-70'	6.0-7.5	w-d	Extremely valuable wildlife/timber tree that adapts to many soil types. Sweeter nuts than English walnut.
Ponderosa Pine	Medium	50-70'+	6-8.0	D-S	Large conifer with broad crown. Drought tolerant. Adaptable, but prefers light soil and/or adequate drainage.
Eastern Redcedar	Medium	20-40'	5.5-8.0	w-D	Super tough, adaptable conifer. Ideal for dense, maintenance-free farmstead windbreaks and wildlife habitat.
Black Hills Spruce	Slow-Medium	20-40'	4.0-7.5	d-s	Reliable evergreen for the Valley. Dense growth provides excellent winter wildlife habitat. Less needle cast than blue spruce.
Meyer Spruce	Slow-Medium	40-50'	5.5-7.5	d-s	Hardy, adaptable evergreen. Similar requirements to other spruces but resistant to needle cast and canker.

STORING YOUR TREES UNTIL PLANTING

For bare root trees: Store in a cool, shady area and check roots daily for moisture. Plant within a week or two. If you're unable to plant right away, pack moist (not dripping) newspaper or leaves around the roots and keep them wrapped in a plastic bag. **The biggest risk to bare root trees is the roots drying out.**

For container trees: Check soil moisture. Lift the pot to feel its weight and poke a finger into the soil ~1" down. If the pot is light or the soil feels dry, soak it completely so that water thoroughly saturates the root ball and the pot feels heavy (try to keep foliage dry). **Water pots thoroughly a day or two before planting.**

Tolerance Key:

- W/w** - Tolerates flooding / wetter sites
- D/d** - Tolerates drought / drier sites
- SH/sh** - Tolerates shade / partial shade
- S/s** - Tolerates salty soil