

Some trees can be a blooming good deal. They lift sagging winter spirits with their bouquets of color. And they're low-care.

Those splashes of color won't be automatically dazzling. There's a knack to selecting and placing flowering trees. Select a tree that's different from your neighbors', perhaps one that blooms a little earlier or later with a different shade of yellow, purple, red, white, or pink.

Check to make sure that certain temperatures, soil types, even local air pollution are compatible with your choice of flowering tree.

The silk tree is no fragile beauty. Feathery foliage and dramatic pincushion flowers make it a great ornamental, but it also has practical value. In addition to doing well in poor, dry, gravelly soil, the silk tree grows faster than other shade trees.

The purple-leaved plum graciously tolerates another adversity: drought. Its ancestry is Persian, but offsprings do well in a variety of soils. From the time delicate flowers appear in April, until the leaves drop in the fall, you can count on color. The tree grows well in shade but takes on its best red-purple hues in the sun. Prune to a single trunk while young, or it will have a shrub shape.

Crab apple trees dominate the May landscape, producing purple, pink, red, or white blooms. Combine crab apples of different colors for a hillside bouquet. Large masses of flowers extend from the tips of the branches almost to the center of the tree.

Columnar varieties take little space, so they can be planted along property lines. Others are low and spreading or weeping. These forms are natural and need little pruning.

The crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), grown in tree or shrub form, needs pruning to retain a single-trunk growth. The effort is worth it. Its crinkled blossoms present a long-playing show with a heavy flush of bloom, followed by sporadic blooming the rest of the growing season. It often blooms in the first year. Crape myrtles can tolerate wet or dry summers as well.

Dogwood is special year round. In spring, fragile-looking blooms layer on horizontal branches. The color comes from white or pink bracts--the real flowers are small and green. Through the summer its foliage isn't marred by insect or disease. In fall, the trees give you a bonus of scarlet leaves and berries. In winter, its horizontal branching is picturesque in an otherwise bleak landscape.