

Fall is the time to plant trees



Purple Leaf Plum

This *Prunus cerasifera atropurpurea* purple leaf plum is one of the unique tree species available through the Friends of the Arboretum "BeFriend a Tree Sale." (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Lloyd Singleton
 Director of N.C. Cooperative Extension Center for New Hanover County

I am a tree hugger, literally. To wrap my arms around and press my chest against the rough, warm bark of a large oak is comforting to me in these days of human physical distancing. Although a tree can't hug back, I certainly feel the arboreal embrace of the many good things a tree does for me.

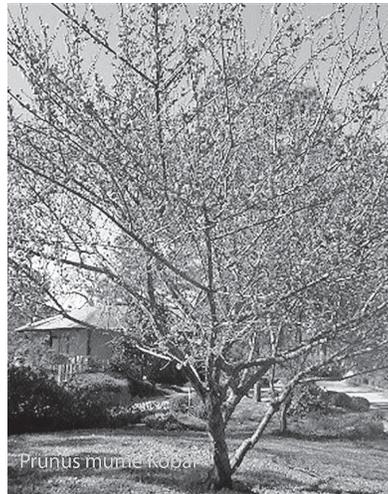
Trees are the giants of the plant kingdom, powerhouses of carbon storage. According to the U.S. Forest Service, trees offset 10 to 20% of U.S. emissions from burning fossil fuels each year. Properly placed trees can reduce the energy required to heat and cool a home by 25% and help to counteract the urban heat effect.

Trees in towns and cities provide critical wildlife habitat, which is one reason why we refer to it as an urban forest. At a time when urban forests are needed most, they are also declining across the country. According to a recent U.S. Forest Service study, about 36 million trees per year were lost in towns and cities of the U.S. due to pests, diseases, and development from 2009 to 2014.

Typically, only a small percentage of a city's forest is located on public land, which means home gardeners can play a vital role in efforts to enhance and maintain urban forests—both for their carbon-trapping and wildlife habitat benefits. To select the right tree for the right spot, consider soil conditions and space. Many native tree species are well adapted to our local conditions, and are often the perfect food and shelter for indigenous wildlife. Planting trees in groups helps share the wind load of storms, and can prove more resilient in hurricanes.

Cooperative Extension is partnering with local governments, schools and organizations for the Wilmington Tree Initiative with a goal of to plant 1739 trees on public and private property by Fall 2021. We will provide education about the value of trees as well as how to select, plant and maintain them. Initiative partners are working together to grow the urban forest, and we need sponsors, volunteers and businesses to help. For details, please visit www.wilmingtontrees.com (and enjoy the cute video).

If you are inclined to grow our urban forest on your own property, the Friends of the Arboretum are having a fall tree sale to offer fun and unique trees to the



Prunus mume kobai

This *Prunus mume kobai* is one of the unique tree species available through the Friends of the Arboretum "BeFriend a Tree Sale." (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)



This rising sun redbud is one of the unique tree species available through the Friends of the Arboretum "BeFriend a Tree Sale." (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

Cape Fear community. Fall is the best time for planting trees around here, and these tree species for gardens with small footprints and fruiting trees for your own food forest have been lovingly hand-picked by volunteer industry professionals. Go to <https://thefriends.wildapricot.org/> and click on tree sale catalog to see the variety of unique trees perfect for our region. Order before Oct. 20 for delivery in November. The funds raised will help support the gardens and programs at the Arboretum.

In other tree news, the venerable volunteer non-profit group, Alliance for Cape Free Trees (<https://www.allianceforcapefreetrees.com/>) is busy preserving, protecting, and planting trees in the region. Visit this website to donate or

volunteer; tree planting events coming up Oct. 21 and Nov. 24 and we need you.

Remember, trees provide aesthetic value and cultural identity to the area and are essential for preserving local ecosystems, managing storm water, creating shade, reducing air pollution, and providing physical and mental health benefits. So, go hug a tree in appreciation for all they do for us, and plant several more this fall.

The Arboretum is free and open every day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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