

Site evaluation form for selecting the right tree

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Answer the following questions, then bring this completed form to a good reference book or software program to choose appropriate trees for the planting site. [Click here](#) for software database.

- 1. What USDA hardiness zone is the planting site located in?**
- 2. What is the average annual rainfall in the area?**
Less than 20 inches or More than 20 inches
- 3. Will the tree be planted:**
In the ground, in containers or in above ground planters, or near the coast
- 4. What is the light exposure at the site?**
More than 6 hours of full sun, between 2 and 5 hours of direct sun, two to five hours of sun with significant reflected light, less than 2 hours of full sun, or filtered shade most of the day
- 5. What is the soil pH at the planting site?**
- 6. How fast does water drain through the soil at the planting site?** Test this by digging a hole 18 inches deep and filling it up with water. If the water drains away in an hour or two, the drainage is fast. If it takes up to a day for the water to drain away, drainage is moderate. If it takes longer than a day, the drainage is slow. Slow, moderate, or fast.
- 7. What is the distance between the top of the water table and the soil surface?** To test this, dig several holes on the site about 2 feet deep and wait 2 or 3 hours. If any water appears in the hole, the site probably has a high water table.
- 8. How will the site be irrigated?**

Hardly at all, during the establishment period only, during establishment and then only during extended drought, the trees will be regularly irrigated.

9. **What is the soil texture?**

Clay, loam, or sand

10. **What is the soil density?**

The soil is compacted and hard, or the soil is loose

11. **Will the tree be planted in a tree lawn or streetscape (the grassy strip between the curb and the sidewalk)?** If so, how wide is the tree lawn?

3 to 4 feet, 4 to 6 feet, 6 to 8 feet, or more than 8 feet wide

12. **Will the tree be planted along a street without a sidewalk.** If so, how far from the edge of the road will the tree be planted?

13. **Will the tree be planted in a sidewalk cutout?**

14. **Will the tree be planted in an open lawn area or in a shrub bed?** What is the approximate size of this area?

15. **Will the tree be planted within 8 feet of a sidewalk, driveway or other hard surface?**

16. **Will an adjacent sidewalk or salt spray or salwater inundation of root system?**

17. **Is there a swimming pool, vegetable garden, masonry wall or septic tank or drain field within 50 feet of the planting site?** If so, how far away is it?
18. **Are overhead wires within 30 feet of the planting site?** If so, what is the horizontal distance between the planting hole and the wire? What is the distance between the ground and the lowest wire?
19. **Is there a street light or security-type light within 35 feet of the planting hole?** If so,
Do you want the tree branches to stay clear of the light so they will not have to be pruned?
Are you willing to provide some pruning to train the branches to grow over the light?
What is the horizontal distance between the light and the planting hole?
How tall is the light?
20. **Is the planting site within 35 feet of a building?** If so, what is the horizontal distance between the planting hole and the building? Approximately how tall is the building?
21. **Would you care to eliminate trees that could drop messy fruit, large leaves or twigs during an extended period?**
22. **Would you like to eliminate trees that are known to be susceptible to breakage?**
23. **What is your budget for pruning trees?**
24. **Would you care to plant only native trees?**
25. **Please list any other attributes** that you would like your trees to have?

26. **Other considerations:** 1) soil salt levels, 2) soil contamination, 3) soil layering, presence of construction debris, 4) health of and type of existing plants, 5) presence of underground utilities, 6) ordinance restrictions, 7) species diversity index, 8) politics, 9) community expectations, 10) design life of site, 11) tree life expectancy, 12) forest vs. former agricultural field, 13) location of existing tree roots, 14) recent construction activities.