

Tree alternatives to Green Ash and Silver Maple

Green ash and silver maple are the two most common shade trees in many of our communities in northeast Nebraska. They are two good growing native trees that are easy to find in nurseries and grow quite readily. In some towns these two tree species combined comprise close to 40 percent of the street tree resource. This over reliance on a limited number of trees is not wise or good for the landscape or community. To create diversity and safe guard against major insect or disease catastrophes, it is good to plant some alternatives to the green ash and silver maple.

Alternative tree species for green ash:

White ash (*Fraxinus americana*) - Native to very eastern Nebraska that is more ornamental than green ash. Some nice ornamentals with purple fall foliage include 'Autumn Purple'.

Black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) - Native in the northern states, this ash is good for wet sites and is very cold tolerant. It may suffer in windy hot locations.

Blue ash (*Fraxinus quadrangulata*) - This ash is native to the upper Mississippi River location and is an interesting tree with square twigs and scaly bark.

Kentucky coffee tree (*Gymnocladus dioica*) - Nice, native legume tree that has large seed pods that hang on the tree. This tree is pest free and has a wonderful coarse winter habit.

American linden (*Tilia americana*) - Native shade tree with fragrant flowers in the spring.

Alternative tree species for silver maple:

Black maple (*Acer nigrum*) - Maple native to western Iowa that is good heat and drought hardy.

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) - Very heavy shade producer with a rounded shape.

Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) - Native to northern climates, this landscape tree with good fall color. Needs protection from dry summer and winter winds. Some suggested cultivars include: 'Northwood', 'Red Sunset', 'Autumn Blaze'.

Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) - Like the red maple, this tree is native to northern climates and is a good hard maple with fall color. Needs moist soils. Some suggested cultivars include: 'Bonfire', 'Green Mountain', 'Legacy'.

Fremanii maple (*Acer x fremanii*) - Red and silver maple cross. Some suggested cultivars include: 'Celebration' and 'Autumn Blaze'.

As you can see, there are some good alternatives for substituting in place of green ash and silver maple. This is only a partial listing. Visit your local nursery store and inquire about different shade trees available for planting. Utilizing some of these other trees will help create diversity and create more beauty in our landscapes and communities. When establishing new trees in a landscape it is important to remember to mulch with a four inch layer of course wood chips around the base of the tree and water sufficiently to moisten the soil every 10 to 14 days. Watering and keeping the area around the base of the tree covered with wood chips will be the best help you can give the newly developing root system of the tree. A healthy root system relates directly to a healthy growing tree.