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KRAMER TREE SPECIALISTS

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As a Board Certified Master Arborist working throughout Northern Illinois, I have witnessed firsthand the profound benefits of planting native trees in our landscapes. While non-native, or “exotic” species often attract attention for their uniqueness, it’s the native trees that provide the strongest foundation for a resilient, ecologically strong, and low-maintenance environment.

Native trees, those that have evolved and adapted to our regional climate, soil conditions, and with our wildlife, offer a multitude of advantages that go beyond aesthetics. In Northern Illinois, species such as Bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), American basswood (*Tilia americana*), and Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) have developed over centuries to withstand the freeze-thaw cycles, clay-heavy soils, and unpredictable precipitation patterns characteristic of our region. These trees thrive with far less intervention than non-natives, meaning reduced need for watering, fertilization, and pest control, making them an economical and sustainable choice for homeowners and municipalities.

One of the greatest ecological advantages of native trees is their role in supporting local biodiversity. A single native oak tree, for example, can support hundreds of species of caterpillars, which in turn feed a wide variety of songbirds. Compare this to a non-native tree that may offer little more than visual appeal.

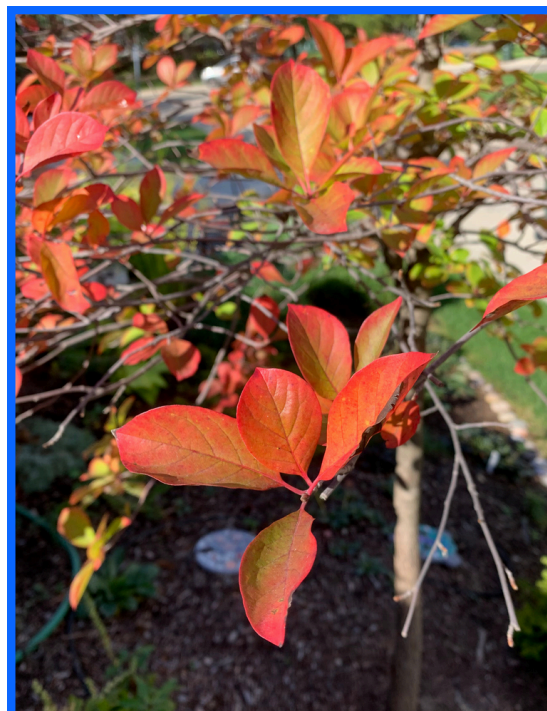
Additionally, native trees are crucial players in stormwater management. Their deep, extensive root systems help reduce runoff, stabilize soil, and recharge groundwater. This is especially vital in urban and suburban areas of Northern Illinois where impervious surfaces are common, and flooding can be a significant issue.

Finally, native trees help to contribute to climate resilience. As climate patterns shift, our best defense is to build systems that are already robust. Native trees, having evolved here, are better equipped to handle both extreme cold and increasing heat and drought events.

Be sure to check out the “Featured Tree” article written about the Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*) which is an excellent example of a native tree to possibly add to your landscape!

NOTES FROM BCMA: THE STRENGTH OF NATIVE TREES

By: Anne Dalrymple
ISA Board Certified Master
Arborist, IL-4275BT



BLACK GUM (NYSSA SYLVATICA)

By Pierre Hatch, Plant Health Care Department, ISA Certified Arborist IL-4658A

About 14 years ago I decided to plant a tree having a hardiness zone 6A: -5 to -10 degrees (F) whereas our hardiness zone (West Chicago) 5B: -10 to -15 degrees (F) due to our changing warming climate. I selected the Black/Sour Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), also by common name of Black Tupelo which comes from the Creek Indian word for swamp and black for the dark green leaves. I planted three 2" diameter specimens in mid-July of that summer and in fall I placed 4"-5" of mulched leaves at the base of each out to just past the drip line.

The winter that year in January/February had five separate days of -20-degree F night temps and -5-degree F Day temps including other numerous nighttime temps that winter of -5 to -10 degrees F. The following spring proved that these trees had survived and have flourished ever since. I can only attribute this to the leaf mulch and snow cover insulating the soil above the roots, and planted in a low, moist site protected from the west winds.



The leaves are alternate, simple glossy green 2"-3" long, that change orange to scarlet red for spectacular fall color. Black Gum is very interesting in that it grows in wetlands and on ridge tops. Most trees would grow in one area or the other, but not both. It can be found in swamps with Bald Cypress and on dry hill slopes with oaks and hickories. Normally it grows natively no farther north than southern Cook County.

Buds are short, pointed, yellowish to red, smooth about 1/8" long produce greenish flowers on long stems appearing early spring when leaves are about 1/3 grown. They are of two kinds: the male in many flowered heads, and the female in several flowered cluster on separate trees. The fruit is a dark blue berry containing a single hard-shelled seed on long stems 2-3 in a cluster ripening in October is a food source for birds. The bark is silvery when young to black as it ages.

The wood has diffuse-porous tree rings, has a pale brown color, moderately hard, heavy, strong but not durable in contact with soil. Wood workers have found it hard to work and it warps easily. It is used for veneers, cabinets, furniture, pulpwood, and firewood. It ranges from Maine to Michigan/Wisconsin, south through Illinois to Missouri, Texas, and east to Florida.

Growth rate is moderate, with a common height of 45' x 35' width and a maximum height potentially up to 80'.

The only other unique situation with these trees was two years ago in December when the temperature went from 50 degrees F and fell 30 degrees F in approximately 8 hours that caused all three to freeze the internal sap resulting in vertically splitting the lower trunks. Since then, they have healed and continue to grow well. Today these trees are 15'-20' tall.

INSIDE LOOK

We're proud to announce that KTS has been recognized as a TREE Fund Research and Education Corporate Supporter for 2025! At KTS, we believe in advancing tree care through research, education, and innovation – and we're honored to support the vital work of TREE Fund in cultivating a greener, healthier future.





THIRSTY TREES? HOW TO KEEP YOUR TREES GREEN THIS DRY SPRING

By Ben Deutsch, Plant Health Care Manager, ISA Certified Arborist IL-1794A

Wow what a spring it's been. We started with a decent amount of rain but since then we have had above normal winds & temperatures. This is the time of year where everyone is putting their gardens in, planting grass and planting trees. We do this because our springs are usually cool & wet, giving everything that extra moisture they need to grow. This year we are near drought conditions. When our spring starts like ours has, we need to make sure that when we aren't getting the necessary moisture that we find time in the morning or evening to water. Focusing on trees here are a few pointers:

- Aim to have your trees receive one inch (1") of water per week; be sure to take into account natural precipitation.
- Do not rely only on your irrigation system used to water your lawn.
- Trees prefer a deep, infrequent soaking, that moistens the top twelve or more inches of soil.
- Use soaker hoses, sprinklers (avoid wetting leaves or needles of plant material). If you use a garden hose on a very slow trickle make sure you move the hose around every 10-15 minutes.
- Be sure to water the entire drip line of the tree; the area beneath the canopy where the tree limbs overhang.
- Water will begin to pool when the ground is adequately saturated.

Lastly, properly mulching your trees will help retain moisture and give your trees some extra nutrients that they can always use. Steps for proper mulching:

1. Add mulch to the base of your tree by removing any grass within a 3 to 10 foot area depending on the size of your tree.
2. Apply wood or leaf mulch 2 to 4 inches deep within the circle.
3. Keep the mulch from touching the trunk of the tree.

Watering & mulching are easy fixes for your trees. If you feel your trees have more or you have concerns, please give us a call so we can have an Arborist come out to take a look and address any issues your trees might have.



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OUT AND ABOUT WITH KTS



We've been out and about, spreading our love for trees and connecting with you! Here's a quick recap:

Turtle Splash Water Park - KTS is thrilled to be a proud sponsor of the West Chicago Park District's Turtle Splash Water Park, opening June 6th! Get ready for a summer of fun in the sun. Be sure to look for our KTS banner and scan our QR code!

Arborist Training Events - Todd and Fabian absolutely crushed leading the Arborist Training classes at Vermeer Midwest throughout the region, over the last few months! From deep dives into PPE and ANSI standards to mastering rigging forces and aerial rescue, they covered it all! Safety first!

iLandscape 2025 - We had an absolutely phenomenal time connecting with so many amazing landscape professionals from all over the state! It was fantastic to see both familiar faces and meet new friends. A huge thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth! We loved hosting our happy hour and the Blackstone giveaway was a blast! We're already looking forward to next year!



The AI Arborists: Action Figure Adventures with KTS

Get ready for the KTS dream team, in action figure form! We had some fun transforming our incredible staff into AI-generated action figures. This is one team ready for any challenge, whether it's tackling complex projects or ensuring your trees are healthy and thriving!

Who's your favorite KTS AI Action Figure?



IN THE YARD WITH WOODY...

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A PAW-SITIVE EXPERIENCE



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