

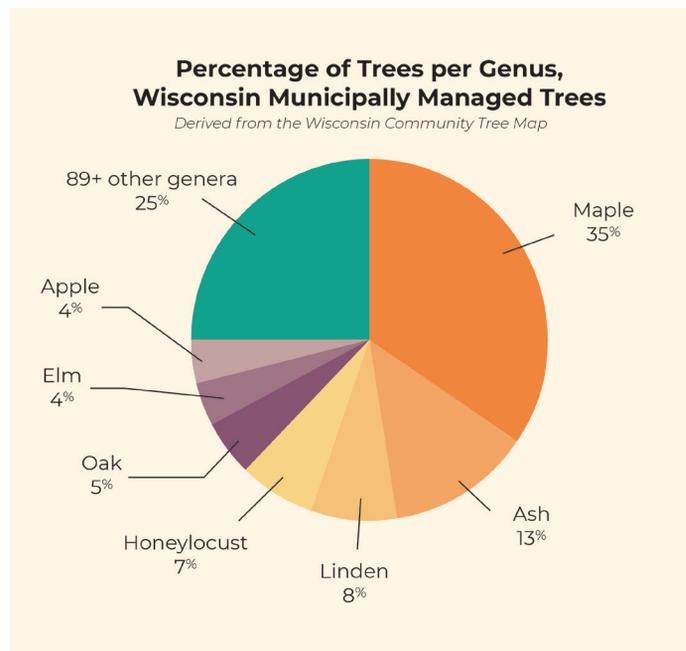


Diverse Forests Are Healthy Forests: Tree Diversity Made Easy

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A diverse urban forest enriches the lives of people by using trees for the many benefits they provide. Dutch elm disease in the 1960s taught us all a lesson about the importance of tree diversity in our urban forests. Maple, ash, honeylocust, and linden were the main trees available to replace the many elms that died. Progress was made, but the few types of trees available forced us into a situation where our urban forests were still not diverse enough. Approximately 20 years ago municipal foresters started promoting and practicing the 10/20/30 rule. Which means you should not have more than 10% species, 20% genus, and 30% family of any one type of tree. Municipal forestry managers with a current tree inventory can use this information to work toward this desired goal. Municipalities without a tree inventory or professional forester often rely on a staff member or consultant to manage their forestry program. If your forestry program does not have a current inventory, it should be a goal to obtain one. One easy solution for increasing diversity is to reduce plantings of maple, honeylocust, and linden if those tree species are abundant. The old saying, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket” applies to tree selection too.

Emerald ash borer infestations in Wisconsin are continuing to kill ash trees and the presence of this insect dictates that ash trees should not be on your planting list anymore. Commercial arborists, nurseries, municipal foresters, and UW Extension agents are excellent sources for local plant knowledge. The websites below provide a source of tree species to consider when selecting trees for your planting sites. Achieving species diversity is a gradual process and it takes persistence, but it can be accomplished one tree at a time.



About the Authors:

This article was authored by Mark Freberg, Green Bay City Forester, Jeff Treu, WE Energies Regional Forester (Retired), and the Species Diversity Issue Group of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council (<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/urbanforests/members>). The Council advises the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on the best ways to preserve, protect, expand, and improve Wisconsin’s urban and community forest resources.

<https://www.arboday.org/trees/rightTreeAndPlace/size.cfm>

<https://learningstore.extension.wisc.edu/collections/trees-shrubs>

<https://www.we-energies.com/safety/tree-planting>

<https://www.mge.com/our-environment/trees-and-landscaping/planting-and-landscaping>

https://www.chicagobotanic.org/plantinfo/tree_alternatives

[Wisconsin Nursery and Landscape Association](#)

[Tree Selection and Diversity: Past, Present and Beyond Presentation \(2021 WAA/DNR Annual Conf. Video\)](#)