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ORNAMENTAL TREES FOR THE FARM GARDEN

By PETER LUFF, Senior Instructor in Floriculture

The need for trees in the farm garden is being realized by many people. Trees around the homestead are required to give such features as shade, colour, fragrance and many other advantages to generally make an area more livable. Besides these advantages, trees appear to help smaller plants flourish by increasing the humidity and providing various degrees of shade and sunlight.

The farmhouse that stands alone, bare of vegetation, is gradually disappearing in Western Australia. Many farmers have the foresight to leave an uncleared area around the house. This helps by giving privacy and protection from such elements as damaging wind and high temperatures. Introducing ornamental trees into the farmhouse garden further enhances these advantages. The combination of these ideas adds to the aesthetic appeal of the homestead.

Many property owners believe that ornamental trees are time-consuming and costly. This is not so, providing that the right trees are selected. Many ornamental trees require virtually no attention once they have been correctly planted.

The positioning of these ornamental trees is most important. Once the position has been decided the tree type should be selected according to such characteristics as height, shade, structure, foliage and flowers.

Once you have decided upon the type of tree required the tree should be selected by name. Information on the species to select may be obtained from catalogues published by the Forests Department or commercial nurserymen or from the Floricultural Section of the Department of Agriculture.

Some trees that would be desirable around the farm garden are listed below.

Tree for areas with 15 to 20 inches annual rainfall

**Acacia pycnantha**: This is the golden wattle, which attains a height of about 15 ft. The tree is dense, having large, shiny, dark green foliage.

**Brachychiton populneus** is commonly known as the kurrajong and reaches a height of about 20 ft. The flowers are small and white and the foliage a dull mid to light green.

**Eucalyptus botryoides** is grown for its height and shade. The common name for this tree is the false mahogany.

**Eucalyptus forrestiana**, with its abundance of red fruit is aptly named the fuchsia gum. The tree reaches a height of about 15 ft.

**Eucalyptus torquata** has pink flowers which are the main feature of this medium height tree. This is commonly known as the coral gum.

**Hakea laurina** can be a rather dense plant which is suitable for a screening effect. Its common name is the pin cushion hakea because of the shape of its flowers. The height of this tree is about 12 ft.
Melaleuca stypheliodes is a very tall tree with prickly dark green leaves. These give it the common name of the prickly paperbark.

*Tamarix aphylla:* This tree is the very salt-resistant evergreen tamarisk or athel tree. The foliage has a bluish appearance and the tree attains a height of 20 ft.

Other trees suitable for areas that receive between 15 and 20 inches of rainfall are:

- *Callitris calcarata*—Black cypress pine.
- *Casuarina glauca*—Grey buloke.
- *Ceratonia siliqua*—Carob bean tree.
- *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*—River red gum.
- *Eucalyptus caldocalyx*—Sugar gum.
- *Eucalyptus crucis*—Silver mallee.
- *Eucalyptus lehmannii*—Bushby yate.
- *Eucalyptus platypus*—Round leaf moort.
- *Eucalyptus stricklandii*—Stricklands gum.

Hakea multilineata—Grass leaved hakea.

*Pinus halepensis*—Aleppo pine.

*Pittosporum phillyraeoides*—Weeping pittosporum.

*Schinus molle*—Pepper corn tree.

Trees for areas with more than 20 inches annual rainfall

*Acacia baileyana:* This is the Cootamundra wattle, which is grown for its silver foliage and yellow flowers. The height it attains is about 20 ft.

*Agonis flexuosa* is commonly known as the willow myrtle or peppermint tree. This tree reaches a height of about 30 feet and is used mainly as a shade tree.

*Brachychiton acerifolia,* better known as the Illawarra flame tree, is grown for its glossy foliage and vivid red flowers. The height of the tree at maturity is about 40 ft.
Callistemon lanceolatus is a bottle brush, which, with its profusion of red flowers, can be grown to screen unpleasant sites. This tree is also known as C. cintrinus and it reaches a height of 15 to 20 ft.

Eucalyptus leucoxylon rosea, more commonly known as the pink flowering whitewood, is grown for shade, bright pink flowers and white bark. The height attained by this tree is about 30 ft.

Hymenosporum flavum, known as the tree frangipanni because of its fragrant golden blossom. The habit of the tree is upright and it reaches a height of about 25 ft.

Prunus blireiana: Belonging to the plum group, this lovely ornamental tree has been given the name of the double pink cherry plum. The tree is deciduous and has bronze to green foliage in summer. The height reached is about 15 ft.

Other plants that will do well in inland areas receiving more than 20 inches annual rainfall are:

- Acacaia decurrens—Black wattle.
- Albizia lophantha—Crested wattle.
- Callitris robusta — Rottnest island cypress.
- Eucalyptus caldocalyx nana—Dwarf sugar gum.
- Eucalyptus erythrocorys—Illyarie.
- Eucalyptus kruseana—Kruse's mallee.
- Grevillea robusta—Silky oak.
- Melaleuca nesophila—Western tea myrtle.
- Myoporum insulare—Boobialla.
- Pinus spp.—Pine trees.
- Populus nigra—Black poplar.
- Tristanea conferta—Queensland box tree.

Watering

If available water for the garden plants is inclined to be saline, select salt tolerant trees such as Tamarix aphylla, the ever-
green tamarisk, or *Eucalyptus botryoides*, the false mahogany.

Naturally, spring-planted trees will need more watering to establish them during the summer months than trees planted in autumn.

I would suggest buying the trees in autumn, as at this time of the year they will be hardened off and will not be root-bound. This will allow planting to be done after the first good rains.

If rain is spasmodic during the winter the trees will greatly benefit from an occasional watering. Watering will probably not be essential during the following summer months but if plenty of water is available, it will greatly hasten growth.

**Planting the tree**

Although there is always the temptation to buy large trees, best results are usually obtained from small trees in their first year of growth. These are more capable of adjusting themselves to their new environment.

On receiving the trees, dig holes in the required positions about 2 ft. deep and 2 ft. in diameter. Fill these holes with a mixture of one part sand, one part friable loam and one part old animal manure. If loam or sand are not available, use two parts top soil and one part old animal manure.

Water the tree in its container and the prepared hole well. Carefully remove the tree from the container, with as little root disturbance as possible. If the roots are curled around the soil ball, carefully separate and straighten them. If the tree is not in a container even more care is needed to limit root damage. Plant the young tree and drive a stake about 6 ft. long and an inch square next to the tree. Water the plant well to remove all air spaces and tie it firmly to the stake. Inspect the tie to the stake periodically. If the tie material is starting to cut into the tree bark, remove it and tie again.

**Care during early growth**

Pruning is not necessary during early growth unless it is desirable to keep the lower branches up. This will allow garden seating and growing plants to be situated beneath the tree. This pruning is done by removing the lateral or side growth to a height of about six feet. The only other pruning they may need is to cut out any dead wood that may appear and also any branches that may cross each other and rub.

Always be on the lookout for pests and diseases, although few appear on ornamental trees in farm gardens. If the tree does become affected, control measures should be carried out promptly.

*Any further information on ornamental trees may be obtained by contacting the Floricultural Section of the Department of Agriculture, Jarrah Road, South Perth.*