

Tree & Shrub of the Month June 2007

Starting with this week's column, I will be featuring one tree and shrub each month to highlight. This monthly segment will be called the Tree and Shrub of the Month. This month's tree is Tulip Poplar, and the shrub is Oakleaf Hydrangea.

Tulip Poplar/*Liriodendron tulipifera*

Tulip Poplar, also referred to as Tuliptree, is the state tree of Tennessee. Tulip Poplar can be found in great abundance in the wild, but also makes a handsome landscape shade tree. Tulip Poplar has a nice flower display in the spring, but it is more of a hidden treasure. It does not have the same pop as a magnolia that is in bloom, but if you take time to look over the tree, you can discover a large amount of beautiful orange-yellow flowers. In the fall, the leaves of Tulip Poplar turn a beautiful yellow and make a great contribution to the fall color season.

Tulip Poplar is a tree that really gets up and goes once it is established in the landscape. A healthy Tulip Poplar should easily put on two feet of growth each year. Tulip Poplar can grow to over 90' tall, so great care should be taken when siting this tree. Leave plenty of room for the tree to develop because it is going to get big quickly. This tree is definitely not for a smaller yard.

Tulip Poplar prefers a good deep soil to perform best. Tulip Poplar has been tried as a street tree, but it just does not hold up well in those types of conditions. Compacted soil and infrequent irrigation will make Tulip Poplar

languish and quickly lead to its demise.

There is a very interesting variegated cultivar of Tulip Poplar now in the trade. When the leaves come out in the spring, they are covered with attractive yellow splotches. When in full leaf, the trees are absolutely fantastic and really stand out in the landscape. The yellow will gradually phase out and revert back to the traditional green for the remainder of the season.

Oakleaf Hydrangea/*Hydrangea quercifolia*

Oakleaf Hydrangea is an absolutely beautiful shrub and is an excellent addition to the home landscape. This hydrangea got its name because the leaves look very similar to red oak leaves. When the leaves come out they have a grayish tinge to them, and then quickly turn to green as they enlarge. In summer, Oakleaf Hydrangea produces a beautiful flower display. Eight to ten inch cones of white are produced throughout the plant. As the flowers age, they fade from a bright white to a very pleasing reddish-pink and then dry to brown. The large brown seed heads are used by many for various indoor decorations. When fall comes around, Oakleaf Hydrangea really puts on a show. The leaves turn to a red burgundy color and create a great visual impact.

Oakleaf Hydrangea tends to grow on the slow side. It is typically wider than it is tall, to about 6'x8' with age, but I have seen old specimens that are larger than this. There are also dwarf cultivars in the market, growing to roughly 4'x4'.

These selections allow you to still be able to grow this beautiful plant if you do not have space needed for this hydrangea's large size.

Oakleaf Hydrangea prefers a good soil that is more on the acidic side. Although you can grow this plant in full sun, it much prefers a partially shaded area in the landscape. Under partial shade with good soil, this plant should thrive for you and be a great addition to your home landscape.