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If you mean to buy a fairly unusual tree or one that is likely to sell out before you have made a move, do something about it quickly. Even if the ground is not currently suitable for planting, you can keep your purchase happy until it is. A bare-root tree can be kept wrapped and damp in a cold shed until things improve. But if you are planting in turf, the soil beneath is usually friable and in reasonable condition, so long as you perform the whole operation of preparation and planting all in one go. Don't let the site become soaked between exposing the soil and putting in your tree. To find the tree you want, turn for sources to the RHS Plant Finder. Here are some of my favourites.

A black mulberry, *Morus nigra*. Fruit is produced from quite an early age and ripens in August-September. Don't make the mistake of buying the useless white mulberry and do remember that mulberries make a terrific stain. No matter if it's lawn beneath them but a nuisance if you wanted to sit there.

The false acacia, *Robinia pseudoacacia*, is grumbled at for dropping spiny branches. Also, if its roots are damaged, for suckering. But it becomes a lovely, light-textured tree with a beautifully fissured trunk, while its pendent racemes of white blossom, late May or early June, are most deliciously fragrant on the air. Particularly beautiful is the variety *Rozynskiana*, its pinnate leaves long and drooping. In early June, that flowers as well as any.

With so great a preponderance of blossom coming in the spring, late flowerers are especially valuable. The Indian horse chestnut, *Aesculus indica*, flowers in late June or July. Its growth is similar to the ordinary chestnut's, so it'll need space but its blush white flowering candles make a great display.

Koelreuteria paniculata, sometimes called Golden Rain, carries its panicles of small, yellow flowers late in July. It makes a charming small tree and is at its best in London, appreciating the extra summer heat. Its elegant pinnate leaves are shrimp pink in spring and change to apricot orange before falling.

A tree doesn't have to flower to be good company. With so many flowering cherries, crabs and prunuses all around us, we might do well to try something different. Years ago, I fell in love with an oak, *Quercus pyrenaica Pendula*, which was growing in Holland Park and I'm very glad I planted one soon after. It makes a beautifully shaped tree, upright in habit but with drooping branches. The long, deckle-edged leaves are quite pale on their undersides. Late in spring, it is briefly covered with long catkins among the unfolding leaves.

A not over-large but spreading tree is made by the deciduous conifer, *Pseudolarix amabilis*. Beth and Andrew Chatto planted one on coming to their newly built Essex home, White Barn House, and it is a good specimen, now. In

spring, its young foliage is the freshest green, long retained, but warm yellow in autumn. Cones, exactly the shape of tiny globe artichokes, are borne on the upper sides of some branches, not on others. It keeps you guessing. I killed my young one, I think by planting it in dense turf where it was starved. But a weeping silver lime, *Tilia Petiolaris*, has done extremely well in such a position. This does need plenty of height, making a tall tree with pendent branches that show the silvery undersides of long-stalked leaves. The scented blossom comes late, usually in early August. Sometimes the leaf colouring changes to warm yellow in autumn, but this depends on the season.

Next to my lime, I have an Italian alder, *Alnus cordata* (nowadays often planted as a windbreak along the boundaries of commercial fruit orchards). It has very large, handsome catkins in March, being one of the latest alders in flower. The foliage is healthy, glossy deep green.

Certain evergreen conifers are tempting. *Sciadopitys verticillata*, for instance, sometimes called umbrella pine because its leaves radiate from a central axis like the spokes of an umbrella. It does not usually make a big tree but is one of the freshest and at its best if allowed to carry its branches right down to ground level, throughout its life.

That goes for many conifers and it is not an unpractical treatment in many private gardens. The Korean silver fir, for example, *Abies koreana*. If it does its stuff as expected, this carries upright cones like short purplish candles on the top of its horizontal branches. I use it as a mixed border plant. When it grows too large for its position, I start again with another youngster, but first use the top of my old one as a Christmas tree. You don't notice its resinous scent until you get it indoors.

Fastigate trees are often useful for taking up little lateral space, but many of them have a stiff and gawky branch system. One of the worst, in this respect, is the far too popular semi-double pink cherry, *Prunus Amanogawa*. It is only tolerable as a baby, becoming increasingly ugly year by year from then on. In a key position, I was recommended to plant the fastigate version of the white pine, *Pinus strobus Fastigiata*, and I have not regretted it. Its fine needles, five to a cluster, are glaucous blue. The tree has remained well furnished right to its base and when it shows a slight inclination to obesity around its waist, we lightly prune the young terminal shoots with secateurs.

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