

## Neutral to Acid Soils

All these plants thrive on neutral to acid soils, except where we've indicated a value for the pH (which is a measure of soil acidity – the lower it is, the more acidic the soil) in which case acid soil is needed. Several trees grown for their autumn colour are included on this list as they give their best colour grown when on acid soils, but they will grow on neutral to alkaline soils.

### Evergreen Trees

*Acacia dealbata*, the Mimosa, which produces its small yellow pompoms against its feathery foliage in late winter and early spring, requires neutral to acid soil and a sheltered, south-facing site.

Most Silver Firs (*Abies*) prefer neutral to slightly acid soils. We particularly like *Abies concolor* 'Candicans' – the White Fir – for its beautiful, blue-grey up-curving needles.

All Spruces (*Piceas*) prefer neutral to acid soils. *Picea pungens glauca* 'Globosa' is a beautiful, blue-green-grey needled, rounded specimen growing to 0.5m by 0.9m after 10 years, which is equally good in large containers.

All Pines enjoy neutral to acid soils and many don't live long on chalky-alkaline soils. We particularly like *Pinus sylvestris* 'Globosa' – a naturally mop-headed variety of the native Scots Pine. We offer it grafted as quarter and half standards, making it perfect for the smaller garden and for the Japanese-style garden.

*Ilex aquifolium* – the Holly, which is good in shade, partial shade or sun. Prefers well-drained, neutral to acid soil.

*Sciadopitys verticillata* – the Japanese Umbrella Pine is a slow-growing and botanically unique conifer – its whorls of 'leaves' are in fact made of stem tissue. It needs rich, moist, acid to neutral to soil. We're very enthusiastic about it and offer both large and small specimens.

### Deciduous Trees

Amongst the Japanese Acers the following have a preference for neutral to acid soils and require planting with ericaceous compost on less acidic soils: *Acer palmatum* (the species, although many of the cultivars are unfussy or prefer alkaline conditions), *Acer plamatum dissectum* 'Garnet' and *Acer palmatum* 'Linearilobum'. Also in this ground is one of our favourites, *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum', with its upright habit and leaves which look like unfolded origami fans.

*Amelanchier lamarckii* – we love this tree with its white flowers opening against fresh bronze leaves in spring, green leaves over summer and rich red autumn colour. Doesn't thrive on poor or alkaline soils, but tolerates drought and full sun.

*Cercidiphyllum japonicum* – the Katsura Tree - often gives a spectacular display of yellows and purples in autumn and the fallen leaves smell of burnt sugar. Tolerates some lime, but grows best on neutral to acid soils and tends to give its best autumn colour on acid soils.

*Liquidamber styraciflua* – the Sweet Gum – the maple-shaped leaves turn reds, oranges and yellows in autumn. We love *L. styraciflua* 'Worplesdon' whose bright green leaves turn fantastic colours in autumn, especially on neutral to acid soils.

*Liriodendron tulipifera* – the Tulip Tree, needs an open sunny position in deep, cool, neutral to acid soil. A drought-hater, it must never dry out.

*Parrotia persica* – the Persian Ironwood – a beautiful, spreading tree bearing small red flowers on bare stems in early spring and giving great reddish-purple and yellow autumn colour. Tolerates a range of soil acidity, but gives its best autumn colour on acid soils

*Sorbus aucuparia* – the Rowan or Mountain Ash gives white flowers in spring and its divided green leaves turning bright red and orange in autumn. If a Sorbus has divided leaves, it does best on neutral to acid soils. Among our favourites is *Sorbus cashmiriana* – the Kashmir Rowan – a beautiful Rowan, ideal for a smaller garden, whose white berries hang on well into the winter as they're a bit too large for birds to eat – good autumn leaf colour. We also like *Sorbus 'Eastern Promise'* which has rosy-pink-berries Rowan and green leaves which turn purple then fiery red in autumn.

*Styrax fargesii* – the Snowbell Tree is best grown on a bank so it can show off its fragrant, bell-shaped, white flowers to best advantage

## Evergreen Shrubs

*Aucuba japonica* – the Spotted Laurel is an unfussy shrub – slow-growing, tolerant of a wide range of soils, happy in the sun where its yellow spots give the best colour, and contented in dry shade where it cheers up dark corners and hedge-bottoms. It can be grown as a hedge itself and either clipped to shape or left to grow more loosely.

*Camellia japonica* has glossy, dark leaves which make an excellent evergreen background to other plants all year once its glorious spring flowers are over. Its ideal pH is between 5.5 and 6.5.

*Camellia sasquana* – the autumn-flowering Camellia may produce a smaller, less showy flower than the spring-flowering variety, but it makes up for this in the abundance and length of its flowering at a time of year (mid-autumn to mid-winter) when flowering shrubs are in short supply. Its flowers are also less likely to be damaged by frost than those of the spring-flowering *C. japonica*.

*Pieris japonica* – amongst the large Pieris we like *P. 'Mountain Fire'*, with its brilliant red young foliage, but our real favourite is *P. 'Debutante'*, which makes a compact bush growing to 1m plus, producing its white flowers over a long period

*Leucothoe 'Scarlatta'* – is a favourite of ours and is ideal for containers or the border, growing to 45cm by 45cm and showing off glossy red and green leaves all year.

*Skimmia japonica* – a valuable plant because its red berries last all autumn winter, often until the flowers appear the following spring. Prefers neutral to acid soil, and is happy on heavy clay. Plant both male and female plants for the best display of berries.

## Deciduous Shrubs

*Cornus kousa* – produces showy white bracts in spring and has good autumn colour

*Cornus florida* – when this group of shrubs flowers in spring, it produces spectacular bracts in whites, creams, lime greens, pinks and crimsons, Interesting, sometimes variegated, foliage comes next, then great autumn colour and even the bare stems over-winter are an attractive dark steel-grey in colour. We love them.

The Witch Hazels are plants with a long period of interest, flowering on bare stems over winter and whose leaves turn vivid reds and yellows in autumn and are slow to fall. We particularly love *Hamamelis x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'* which bears bright-golden flowers from December to February and has good autumn colour.

The Magnolias include the spring-flowering *Magnolia x loebneri 'Leonard Messel'* whose large, pink flowers cover the plant before the leaves emerge and *Magnolia denudate 'Yulan'* which produces whose large, pale cream, goblet-shaped flowers do likewise, both of which we offer as

standards as well as bushes. Neutral to acid soil is also essential for the late-flowering *Magnolia 'Heaven Scent'*, whose deeply-fragrant, pink flowers often miss frost damage.

### **Climbers**

*Schizophragma hydrangeoides 'Roseum'* – a relative of the Hydrangea from China and Japan, producing slightly fragrant, lace-cap style flowers with pink outer bracts in midsummer. Best grown against a wall or fence, it self-clings using aerial roots and prefers neutral to acid soil.

*Wisteria sinensis* (the Chinese Wisteria) for us Wisterias are the jewels of the botanical world – easy to grow, extremely long-lived, vigorous and magnificent when in flower. Cascades of fragrant flowers in whites, pinks and blues are produced in late spring.

### **Ground Cover**

*Pachysandra terminalis* is our favourite ground cover. It's a very dwarf evergreen shrub, which spreads to make dense ground cover beneath larger shrubs and trees and is happiest in full or partial shade. Ideally grown in acid soil.