

Tree Talk

South Dakota's Native Trees

For those of us who live in South Dakota, we know how hard it can be to get trees to grow and survive in the conditions we are dealt with. There are several different species of trees available for the varying climate zones and soils that occur throughout the state. As you might imagine some of the best trees available to us are the native ones.

One of our hardiest native trees is the Bur Oak. This tree can be planted statewide and will tolerate many different growing conditions. This tree has always been known as a slow grower, but this is false. Once a Bur Oak is established, and is taken care of, it will put on an average of 1-2 feet of growth per year. These trees are long lived with a lifespan of over 200 years.

Another well known South Dakota tree is the Boxelder. This tree is another one of our few native trees that can grow just about anywhere in the state. While the native form is not often looked upon as an ornamental, we have a new cultivar of Boxelder that is. "Sensation" Boxelder is an upright growing tree, with better branch structure and a nice red fall color.

If you are looking for a smaller ornamental tree for your landscape setting, the native Hawthorn might be a good selection. This tree can be found anywhere in the state. There are several different types of Hawthorn, but for our region, the thornless Cockspur Hawthorne is our species of choice. This tree grows to a height of 15 to 25 feet and gives off a nice fall color.

The "Black Hills" White Spruce is a native tree to the hills area. Although native to the Black Hills, this evergreen can be grown on most sites across South Dakota. The tree has few disease and pest problems unlike the over-planted Colorado Blue Spruce. The White Spruce has a densely pyramidal habit and darker needle color.

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