

Use your Head when Planting your Bed!

When selecting plants for your landscape, do your research and save yourself both time and money. Some small shrubs develop into some very large specimens, threatening to devour your home and everything in its path! It is seen more and more often, trees and shrubs covering windows, sides of homes, blocking sidewalks and driveways. Not only is it unsightly, it hinders those who walk, jog and bike in the community.

Common examples of this are *Ligustrum japonicum* (Japanese Privet) (*Viburnum odoratissimum* (*Viburnum*)), *Thuja orientalis* (*Arborvitae*) and the beloved *Podocarpus macrophylla* (*Podocarpus*). These plants do very well until they can no longer be maintained at reasonable sizes, when the shape begins to distort and begins to look less like a shrub and more like it should have its own zip code. When maintained on a regular basis they can be controlled more readily, although it is far less expensive to know prior to selection what a plant may become in a few years.



Some questions to ask before planting would be:

- How long until this plant reaches its full size?
- Will it present an issue with utilities, sewer pipes or power lines?
- What will this plant's purpose be?
- Will this shrub or tree aid with energy conservation? For example, deciduous trees lose their leaves, which will allow heat in winter and shade in summer.
- What type of maintenance will this plant need? Will it need additional watering, insect and or disease control or pruning?
- Allergies: Trees most likely to trigger allergies are those that spread their pollen on the wind. This group includes some types of junipers, oaks and pines.

There are numerous resources on the internet, including your local Cooperative Extension office <http://hillsborough.extension.ufl.edu/>. Other resources include your local landscaping company, local nurseries, and for a quick reference at a glance, look around your neighborhood!

The information for this article is provided by the Tampa Tribune and their correspondent Craig Chandler, who is a professor of horticultural sciences at the University of Florida's Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in southern Hillsborough County, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Agent Robert Cox, and Stormy Holloway, Sterling Management Services. 5.12.09sh