The Grange Association

100 Desirable Trees to plant in the gardens of The Grange, Edinburgh for the Millenium (or later)

Alistair Scott

Prologue

There are several admirable guides to garden trees. The best may be *The Garden Tree* by Alan Mtchell and Allan Coombes and *Trees for your Garden* by Roy Lancaster. The snag is that, although these admirable experts know thoroughly the ecological variations across Britain, they do not have the space to enter the essential codicils for an East Coast Scottish gardener. There is a splendid book entitled *Modern Trees* and written for a Scottish audience. This is by E.H.M.Cox and P.A.Cox of Glendoick, and is written from deep, personal knowledge but it appeared in 1961 and is long out of print. The present booklet is addressed to the gardeners of the Grange, in Edinburgh, and is based on trees growing in East Scotland, mainly in the Lothians and Borders.

Clearly no two people look at any tree with the same eye. It seemed impossible to write dispassionately about favourite trees, so this is avowedly, even defiantly, biased. The bias is against pink flowers, purple foliage, almost all forms of variegation, species that have to be over mollycoddled and trees that are interesting for one week of the year then disappear into anonymity. The bias is towards species, rather than varieties or cultivars, trees with a range of pleasures in bark, silhouette, flower, fruit or leaf, and those with an interesting natural history.

The text does not attempt to be comprehensive about the appearance or botany of the chosen trees since this information is readily available elsewhere and no description can begin to substitute for the real tree. Instead it concentrates on where you may see examples and why you might wish to.

Despite the obvious hazards it did seem essential to say something about the likely height and spread of each tree in our conditions. For example, no-one whose only encounter with a *Ginkgo biloba* has been in southern France is likely to contemplate such a tree for a small Edinburgh garden; in fact its growth with us is so slow and the slow-grown tree so satisfactory that it could be a most desirable choice. I have adopted Roy Lancaster's classification of ultimate height which is S=10-20', M=20-50', L=over 50' and have augmented the statistic in the text when it is crucial. But, to repeat my mantra, I hope no-one is going to commit themselves to a tree for life without seeing it full grown first and within our climatic region.

Not many years ago, obtaining a tree which was not run-of-the-mill could become a nightmare. All that has changed with the arrival of *The Plant Finder*. This entirely admirable annual publication from the **Royal Horticultural Society** lists the unusual stock available from virtually every nursery in Britain. Nurseries specialising in 'mail order' seem to have sorted out the packaging and delivery so that, in my experience, the plants have arrived in good condition, expeditiously and at very reasonable carriage charges, from Somerset, Forres and Cairdow. Clearly it is preferable to buy on sight, but there is now a viable alternative.

All the trees mentioned can be seen by the public, although a few are in gardens only opened once or twice a year, unless by privately arranged visit. We are hugely fortunate in having the Royal Botanic Garden (RBG) on our doorstep, and the wonders of Dawyck not far away, upstream from Peebles.

I am most grateful to the following who offered sage and forthright comments on the 100 trees that I first had in mind to include and suggested a number of alternatives. Derek Beavis, Garden Supervisor at the RBG; Geoff Brooks, formerly Superintendent of Grounds at the University of Edinburgh; Mrs Robin Gaze; David Knott, Curator, Dawyck Botanic Garden; Peter McGowan, Landscape Architect; Dr John Macleod; Reverend Jock Stein, Carberry Tower. As ever Dr Gerald France and Dr Derek Lyddon were generous with their help. My wife Barbara, with admirable patience, edited my slapdash approach to the word processor, for which many thanks.

Clearly none of this could have happened if the trees were not there for us to look at and enjoy. As ever, I feel a huge gratitude to those who sought out and planted such a wealth of trees for us. Our responsibility to leave a similar legacy for the next generations is plain - and being fulfilled.

Alistair Scott September 1999

The trees

Acer capillipes Red snake-bark maple Japan 1894 S-M

Wonderful bark, (white stripes on grey green) distinguished leaves, (glossy green, parallel veins, red petioles) vivid autumn colours, neat shape. This must be amongst the best garden trees, if you can give it a modicum of shelter. Excellent tree in the RBG.

Acer cappadocicum Cappadocian maple Caucasus to Japan 1838 M-L

The Cappadocicum maple is reliably hardy and grows well in the Lothians, too well for a small garden. At close quarters the grey 'smoothly-crinkled' bark and the leaves with five regular long-pointed lobes are distinctive and distinguished features. The tree comes into its own, though, in early autumn when the leaves turn buttery yellow.

Acer carpinifolium Hornbeam maple Japan 1879 S

I know of only one Hornbeam maple in the Lothians but that tree, at Carberry, is so handsome that it deserves a place. The leaves are the feature; hornbeam-like as the name implies, fresh green, neatly toothed and with a score or more of parallel veins. It may need training when young to bring it to the neat, regular shape of the Carberry tree.

Acer davidii Pére David's maple China 1879 S-M

There are two fine trees at Carberry, showing off the green bark slashed white. The leaves are unlobed, largish and fine toothed. There are a number of named forms of this variable maple, particularly 'Ernest Wilson' and 'George Forrest'. There is a good example of the latter in the RBG, with dark green leaves on rhubarb red petioles. This is one species which you really must see in leaf in the nursery before you buy.

Acer ginnala Amur maple Northern China, Mongolia 1860 S

The Amur maple is not as often seen as it deserves to be. It tends to make a thicket as it does in nature but can be trained to a single stem. The leaves are small with a long, pointy, terminal lobe and deeply toothed. Together they give the crown a light dancing feeling, wonderfully enriched as they colour in autumn. Very hardy. The tallest in Britain is near Dunblane. A bonus is that the flowers are fragrant.

Acer grosseri var *hersii* Hers's maple China 1927 S-M

Hers's maple suffers a little under a confusion of names, often appearing as *A. grosseri* or *A. hersii* or variations thereof. It is amongst the best of the snakebarks with a well-behaved and characteristic shape. The leaves have a curious rubbery texture. It is hardy in the Lothians, a good grower and not uncommon.

Acer nikoense Nikko maple Japan 1881 S

If I was confined to a single maple, this would be my choice. I have met it, with a shock of pleasure on each occasion, at Castle Milk, Blair Drummond, Tyninghame and Glendoick, where all are smallish, sturdy trees. The leaves are trifoliate; pleasantly hairy and always interesting - yellowish in spring, red in autumn - and, in summer, dark green on top but glaucous below. Apparently it should now be called *A. maximowiczianum*.

Acer pensylvanicum Moosewood Eastern North America 1755 S-M

Moosewood is often in the understorey of the woods of New England below beech, birch and hemlock. The leaves are large so as to catch the reduced light and very distinct, especially when they turn clear gold in autumn. There is one at Suntrap but not many elsewhere. It must be sensible to give this maple some dappled shade. The rigid rules of botanical nomenclature require that once *pensylvanicum* - after William Penn - was misspelt, it had to stay misspelt. Daft.

Acer platanoides 'Drummondii' Of nursery origin 1903

I make an exception to my own prejudice against variegation for this splendid tree. The books say that this cultivar will grow as large eventually as the parent species, the Norway maple, but I have not seen one of that dimension and do not want to, not least because the older trees have a tendency to revert. To begin with, the margin of all the leaves is cream, but they fade to white as the season progresses, "brightening" as Alan Mitchell wrote "everything around". Deservedly and pleasantly common.

Acer rufinerve Grey budded snake bark Japan 1879 S

This cheerful small tree is not very different from *A. capillipes* in appearance except that the leaves are broader than long, usually with distinct side lobes. The buds really are blue or blue-grey. There are healthy trees within Edinburgh, at Dawyck and, further afield, at Branklyn and Crathes.

Acer saccharum Sugar maple Central and eastern North America 1735 M-L

This is the tree from which sugar maple is tapped. I include it on the strength of an excellent tree at Kailzie (down the Tweed from Peebles), a number of others in Perthshire and an astonishing specimen in Stornoway. The Kailzie tree has always had growing space and is now substantial; roundheaded and overall like a blue-chip Norway maple. It is unsuitable for the smaller garden.

Aesculus flava Sweet or yellow buckeye Eastern USA 1764 M

A garden has to be substantial before it can accomodate a free-growing Horse chestnut. Such a tree is out of place if it has to be mutilated every few years. So is there a chestnut which will fit the smaller garden? There is an extravagantly healthy *A. turbinata* with huge leaves in deepest Moray which suggests this as a possibility. There are a few examples of the elegant Indian chestnut *A.indica* around - Glendoick, Malleny - but the tree with the best track record is *A. flava*. With us it is not an overwhelming tree - cf Arniston, Kinfauns (outside Perth) or Dunkeld House. The leaves are neat and well coloured, the bark is curious and the branches twist about in an entertaining manner.

Ailanthus altissima Tree of Heaven China 1751

My first consciousness of *Ailanthus* was a huge tree in the grounds of Malvern Priory. To northern eyes there seemed something wonderfully exotic about the large pinnate leaves - not unlike those in the paintings of the Douanier Rousseau. Later I grew one in Elgin, coppicing it every backend to get, next year, sprouts over head high. Fortunately I have not seen it in the cities of the eastern USA where, I gather, it roots around, vigorous and impervious as Japanese knotweed. The trees scattered through Edinburgh are modest in size compared with those in warmer summers. The interesting bark is better revealed by cleaning off the lower branches in youth.

Alnus glutimosa 'Imperialis' Cut-leafed alder Of nursery origin 1853 M

Perhaps the Italian *A. cordata* is the most handsome alder but it grows far too large for the average garden, as a visit to Smeaton - where two of the best in Britain grow - will confirm. This most elegant version of the common native alder is altogether better behaved for garden purposes. The leaves are deeply cut into lobes which are drawn out into fine points. As with most cut-leafed trees, the effect is to lighten the canopy.

Arbutus menziesii Madrona Western North America 1827 M

Most books are discouraging about growing the Madrona in Scotland, but ignore them! Since the tree is an understorey species in the Pacific north west, it is sensible to give it shelter or frost protection in the early years but the fine mature trees at Castle Menzies near Aberfeldy and Innes House near Elgin are fully exposed and growing at least as well as the protected trees in the RBG and at Carberry. The bark is astonishing. It is worth some perseverance in the hope of reaping such a reward.

Arbutus unedo Strawberry tree Europe Native in Ireland

Strawberry trees are best seen in the Lothians at Tyninghame and at the entrance to Dunglass House but a few are also tucked away in Edinburgh. Maybe there would have been more had the Botanics' specimens not been savaged by frost in the mid 19th century leaving a collective memory about their long-term vulnerability. Our trees are yellow-green by the luxuriant standards of Killarney where the tree is native but we are so short of pleasant, well-tempered evergreens that this is worth consideration.

Betula albo-sinensis Chinese red bark birch China 1901 M

A well grown red bark birch is a show-stopper. There are several in the RBG, at Carberry and quite a few planted in local gardens in the last decade or so but the best I know is at Branklyn, the immaculate National Trust garden on the eastern outskirts of Perth. Unsurprisingly, given its origins in the mountains of China, this birch is hardy, though it does tend to look sparsely clothed if fully exposed to all the winds that blow. The bark is always red - if varying from orangey red to coppery red - and peeling. It is nearly impossible not to pat the trunk in passing. The variety *septentrionalis* has longer leaves.

Betula ermanii Erman's birch North eastern Asia, Japan 1890 M-L

Erman's birch grows over a vast area of South east Asia and is variable. The parallel veins on the leaf and the numerous, upright, female catkins in winter are the most constant features. But the tree should be grown for its bark - creamy white, tinted pink, becoming orange brown. Erman's birch can be equated in growth with our own birch so it is not for the smallest space. A fine tree in the RBG is over 60 foot.

Betula maximowicziana Monarch birch Japan c1890 M

I promise myself sometime to find and read a biography of Carl Maximowicz. He was a Russian botanist obviously very active in South east Asia at the end of the 19th century. It must have been quite a moment; the first westerner's sight of a Monarch birch. The leaves are as big as lime leaves - glossy green and elegantly toothed. It grows fast and ultimately may need more space than is commonly available but it will have given perhaps 30 years of happiness before then.

Betula nigra Black or river birch Eastern USA 1736 S-M

This small tree is obviously a birch but has, in comparison to home-grown birches, diamond-shaped leaves and an unusual bark which becomes shaggy with age. Though most specimens I enjoy are in the south of England, I include it because of a good tree in Dundee Botanic Garden and because it is likely to be hardy, given its origins. While it grows best by water it seems not to need other than a respectable garden soil.

Betula pendula Silver birch Europe M-L

Silver birch needs no recommendation but there are two points to make. First do not be fobbed off with the other native birch *B. pubescens* which looks fine by a burn in Assynt, say, but is the less graceful tree in shape, bark and details of the leaf. Second, since silver birch is so variable, how can one ensure obtaining the most elegant? There is no easy answer. One possibility is to dig up seedlings from road widenings through birchwoods with a high ratio of attractive trees. The practice is technically illegal but since birch regenerates by the million on bare soil in the presence of seed trees, common sense indicates that a few seedlings will not be missed.

Betula utilis var *jacquemontii* 'Jermyns' Of nursery origin

Birches are very variable in nature and get worse when taken into cultivation. If you want a birch with a glowing white bark and a single stem, go and make your choice from the spectacular collection in the RBG, and then approach a specialist nursery. If that seems too complicated merely order a *Betula utilis* var *jacquemontii* 'Jermyns' and you will not be disappointed. These are propagated vegetatively and are thus genetically identical.

Carya cordiformis Bitternut Eastern North America 1689

I do not think that most hickories will grow satisfactorily in Scotland, thus depriving us of a very characterful genus. There is one exception however, albeit based on a single tree and I do not know what difficulties it may have had to overcome in its youth. This is the bitternut in the RBG on the right of the path from the east gate to the pond just before the Chinese garden. It is interesting at any time of the year - yellow buds in winter - but stunning when the big pinnate leaves turn golden yellow in autumn. The nuts, like small cheggies, are not difficult to germinate.

Cercidiphyllum japonicum Katsura Himalayas to Japan 1864 M

Although there are a few Judas trees around - the best at Tyninghame - they are too miffy in our climate and are not worth growing. Fortunately the Katsura is a happy, vigorous substitute and now pretty well known. Trees in the open can have their first leaves frosted but (always?) recover. That apart, the Katsura has everything - distinctive winter tracery, interesting leaves in spring, summer and (spectacularly) autumn, pleasant bark and the arresting smell of burnt sugar as the leaves fall. If you were confined to a single tree, especially in a dampish situation, this might be it.

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Wisselii' Wissel's cypress Of nursery origin 1888 M

Used with discretion and subtlety, Lawsons' many forms are an asset in almost any garden, giving height, shape and colour. Too often, alas, they seem planted at random. Almost invariably this odd and distinctive form is a pleasure. There are good trees at Kailzie, Dawyck and unexpected places like Flotterstone. Wissel's scarcely looks like a Lawson Cypress but check the conelets and the taste.

Chamaecyparis obtusa 'Crippsii' Hinoki cypress Of nursery origin 1901

Of all the false-cypresses, I prefer *C. obtusa*; within the species, I greatly enjoy this cultivar. It is a bright golden yellow, seen to perfection on a tree centrally placed at Dawyck. As ever it is difficult to explain one's taste, but I find something in the configuration of the Hinoki cypress, the lie of the foliage, the curve of the branches and the interest of the bark which give it a quality its cousins lack.

Cladrastis lutea Yellow-wood South eastern USA 1812 M

This is another recommendation based on a single tree in the RBG, so there is a risk of failure but it is good fun to try. The tree is reliably pleasant in winter - smooth grey bark on sinuous branches - while in summer the widely-spaced leaflets have impressed veins. In autumn the leaves turn bright yellow. The flowers - it belongs to the pea family - are small, white and fragrant. The wood is yellow when freshly cut, which could be a bonus if one had to remove a tree prematurely.

Cornus controversa Table dogwood Japan, China pre 1800 S-M

The table dogwood is an arresting tree in leaf or out. It does not here reach the sizes of Sussex, say, or Cornwall which is a benefit because we can grow it in smaller gardens without losing its essential character. There are excellent examples at The Mill House, Temple, Carberry, Tyninghame and, further afield, Etal in Northumberland. Unusually for a dogwood the flowers are not surrounded by bracts. As the name implies the tree is distinctly layered, often with daylight between the layers.

Cornus kousa Japanese strawberry tree China, Korea, Japan 1907 S

This can make a tree of 30 foot in Sussex and 20 foot in Glendoick so just about qualifies for inclusion though it is more often seen in Edinburgh as an arching shrub. The magisterial Bean declares that *C. kousa* should be in every garden. The bark is redbrown and peeling; the leaves have that appearance characteristic of all dogwoods;the small flowers are surrounded by showy, creamy, long-lasting bracts; the strawberryesque fruit is fun and (just about) edible. If not in every garden, it should be in more.

Cornus mas Cornelian cherry Europe Romans? S

I cannot resist including the Cornelian cherry. It can just about be made into a small tree if pruned when young, though perhaps bush is the better configuration and 'thicket' would be a better term for the growth in the RBG. Whatever the shape, the mass of small yellow flowers, just before the leaves, is a most welcome sign that warmth is returning. It springs into flower overnight. One day nothing; the next day everything. The fruit is good to look at and to eat - copious in some years. This, for the Greeks, was the preferred source of walking staves - for the long-lived Tiresias in particular.

Crataegus tanacetifolia Tansy-leafed thorn Asia Minor 1789 S

There are a number of thorns with cut-leafed foliage worth consideration. The more common is *C. laciniata* syn. *C. orientalis*. I know two tansy-leafed thorns, one in the RBG and one planted recently by the Friends of Malleny, and like them both. Apart from the fretted foliage, the flowers are white and fragrant and the small, crab-like fruit are a pleasant yellow. Roy Lancaster says they are "maddeningly slow in growth and rarely offered by the nursery trade". Slowness, though, is not such a defect in a small garden, if the small plant is nearly as enjoyable as the mature tree.

Davidia involucrata Dove Tree China 1903 M

As the years pass I become less sure about the Dove Tree in Scotland. There are several vigorous, youngish trees in the RBG but there appear to be few older specimens around and the best mature tree, at Dalmeny, seems to be going back although on a moist, fertile site as recommended. So this may be a relatively short-lived tree with us and one (remember!) which does not flower for the first decade. Nonetheless the Davidia has too much quality to be omitted. The leaves are good, the bracts are astonishing and I particularly like the bark.

Diospyros kaki Chinese persimmon or kaki Known only in cultivation S

The tree experts at the RBG say not to bother with the kaki. They are right of course in the sense that the tree needs substantial summer warmth before it will make a tree even as big as a mature plum, let alone ripen the orange-yellow fruit which are like flattened tomatoes. However the bark - almost black and cut into little squares with rounded edges, like a superior pear - is an aristocrat among barks and it is worth growing for this alone. It is pleasant to be told that the generic name derives from dios = divine and pyros = wheat.

Embothrium coccineum Chilean fire bush Chile 1846 S

Everyone in the Grange knows the *Embothrium* in Lauder Road. Year by year it has become more pyrotechnic. Was 1999 the zenith? This tree - or tall bush if you prefer - defies all the rules. It should be in shelter, particularly protected from cold winds and the best result will be in the south and west of Britain, yet this continues to prosper. However, anyone else attempting to grow perhaps the most exotic-looking 'tree' in our repertoire would be well advised to stick by the principle of shelter.

Euclyptus pauciflora subsp *niphophila* Snow gum Australia 1880 M

On the whole Eucalypts are to be avoided in Edinburgh gardens. Either they grow enormous in no time at all, or they are snuffed out by a sharp drop in temperature. Some energetic gardeners keep *E. gunnii* more or less under control with an annual or biennial trim. There is one Eucalypt however which is reliably hardy - if it is drawn from the mountainous part of its range - and not too overwhelmingly large. This is the Snow gum. Happily it is also one of the best with a bark 'marbled like a python's skin'. There is a fine tree in the Pollock Halls.

Eucryphia x nymanensis 'Nymansay' Garden origin 1919 M

Given space, an *Eucryphia* is invaluable for filling in the flowerless (in tree terms) month of August. Nothing equals a 30' column covered from top to toe with big, white flowers of the rose family. The deciduous *E. glutinosa* is a possible choice but this evergreen is perhaps to be preferred. (*E. glutinosa* is one of the parents). In the books there is an interesting species named *E. milliganii*. It is described as having "miniature white, cup-shaped flowers in July" and being "an excellent miniature tree for the small sheltered garden" but I do not know of an example in the Lothians.

Fagus engleriana Chinese beech China 1911 M

I met and fell in love with my first Chinese beech at Innes House in Moray. It is manifestly a beech but small and multi-stemmed with very pleasant light green leaves, tapering at both ends. The tallest in Britain - at Westonbirt - is 60' tall. The trees at Dawyck and the RBG are half that size. It is a puzzle why such an aristocrat among trees should be so uncommon.

Fagus sylvatica 'Dawyck' Chance seedling extensively propogated c1860

The original Dawyck beech, transplanted to its present position in about 1860, is now near enough 100' tall. This is too large for the average suburban garden but could be an imaginative addition to the surrounds of flats or hotels or offices, especially if planted in groups. The tree has everything a beech has - silken, fresh green leaves in spring, wondrous autumn colour - while remaining comfortably narrow.

Ginkgo biloba Maidenhair China 1758 S

There are more Ginkgos growing in the Lothians than many folk realise. The largest that I know and perhaps the oldest is at Dalkeith Estate just before the Laundry Bridge. I think of Ginkgos as desperately slow - one I grew in Elgin did not get above waist height in a decade - but I know of two espaliered on an Edinburgh south wall which must be vigorously pruned to keep them in check. Anyway slowness is, in this case, an asset; everyone can have one of these astonishing relicts beside the front path. Both sexes are needed for fruit but the stinking 'plums' will not trouble anyone in Edinburgh unless global warming gets serious.

Halesia monticola Snowdrop Tree South eastern United States 1897 S-M

This is included essentially on the strength of one tree near the western entrance to the RBG, and a recommendation from the Coxes of Glendoick. (Branklyn has the closely related *H. carolina*). Although the leaves are insipid, the bark is good - dark grey and deeply fissured. The principal pleasure is, however, the astonishing display of flowers - hence the American name of Mountain Silverbell. The genus was named for the Reverend Stephen Hales (1677-1761), curate of Teddington, near London.

Ilex x altaclerensis 'Camellifolia' Highclere holly Garden origin S -M

Plain, ordinary holly seems to me an admirable plant in woodland - amongst the ancient oaks in Dalkeith Estate for example - but I do not see it as justifying critical garden space and I would banish all its variegated versions. I am fond though of the plainer end of the Highclere hollies and especially this fairly common variety with purple shoots, large, glossy, almost spineless leaves and big red berries. If you need a tall, dense, well-shaped, hardy evergreen this is tailor-made.

Juglans ailantifolia Japanese walnut Japan 1860 M-L

If you have space for a common walnut but want to try something a little different, the Japanese walnut would be an interesting choice. Ultimately it can make as large a tree - there is a whopper in Northumberland - and

may spread more. The leaves are huge, especially on young trees. There is a good tree in the RBG and another at Biel. The somewhat similar American white walnut grows happily at Tyninghame but the young tree in the RBG is a poor thing, suggesting that it is too high a risk.

Juglans regia Common walnut Originally Asia, Planted throughout Europe M-L

With its pale grey, smooth, platey bark, characteristic branch pattern and large terminal leaflet, the walnut is distinct and distinctive despite coming into leaf very late and falling early. Many of the Edinburgh trees are about 7'-8' round and something like 150 years old. The biggest (?) is at Mortonhall House. It is 10' round and a fine, healthy tree. Clearly walnuts need space.

Juniperus communis 'Hibernica' Irish juniper Of nursery origin S

Juniper is our third native conifer after Scots pine and yew. It is highly variable in nature, as can be seen in Morrone National Nature Reserve, just west of Braemar. Irish juniper is no more nor less than a selected form which grows particularly narrow and upright, capable in time of 15'-20'. I can think of no better foil to the doorway of a house than a pair or group of Irish junipers.

Kalopanax pictus var *maximowiczii* China, Manchuria, Korea, Japan 1865 M

This Kalopanax is rare in Scotland yet the trees at Dawyck, Stobo and the RBG are entirely healthy and hardy. For good measure that is also true of trees at Inverewe and Durris, Aberdeenshire. Opinions divide sharply. Some find it gaunt and lumpy, with too sparse foliage; others, myself included, find it interestingly exotic in bole, foliage, flower and silhouette. var *maximowiczii* is distinctly different from the type, with larger leaves, much more deeply lobed. To my mind it is absolutely preferable. The tree suffers the indignity of having acquired the book name of Castor Aralia. In life, everyone calls it *Kalopanax*.

Laburnum x watereri 'Vossii' Voss's laburnum Cultivated hybrid Before 1864

Laburnums are like Hybrid tea roses - essential while in flower but inessential for the rest of the year. Perhaps they are best in a friend's garden, especially if grown thickly as a tunnel. The surge of pleasure at the first tunnel I ever saw, at Bodnant in North Wales, is still with me. If your own Laburnum is a must, plant this hybrid between *L. alpinum* and *L. anagyroides*. It is superior to either parent.

Laurus nobilis Bay tree Mediterranean Romans? S

There is something well-tempered and aimiable about the sweet bay, or bay tree, or bay laurel. Perhaps it is familiarity with the leaf in the kitchen, or some recollection of its role in classical mythology, or that it is such a well shaped tree-bush, or all of these things. It can be caught by frost in inland areas but all the big bushes that I know in the Grange look fine. Nonetheless it is a sensible precaution to give any Mediterranean plant a degree of shelter in our climate.

Liquidamber styraciflua Sweet gum Eastern USA 1681 S-M

I had almost omitted the sweet gum because, to anyone familiar with the autumn display on its home patch or further south in Britain, what happens with us is so disappointing. But I cannot omit a tree with such splendid, star-shaped leaves. There should be no worries about hardiness judging from the trees in the RBG, or Carberry, or indeed at Innes House in Moray. I see that there are two forms - 'Lane Roberts' and 'Worplesdon' - particularly proven for their autumn colour, which may increase the chances.

Liriodendron tulipifera Tulip tree Eastern North America c1650 S-M

The tulip tree is one of that group of trees, including Ginkgo, Liquidamber and Tree of Heaven, which will not grow in the Lothians to the dimensions which would exclude them as garden trees - thus, an apparent disadvantage becomes an asset, and we can take pleasure in the striking foliage without worrying that the tree will take over. They are fairly commonly to be encountered across the Lothians. The books say always plant them from container stock and be particularly careful not to damage them with spade, mower or the dreaded strimmer.

Magnolia denudata Yulan lily China, Japan 1789 S-M

The only Yulan lily that I know outside Kew is the tree in the RBG, but if one will grow why not another of perhaps the most beautiful flowering trees in these islands. You will have to learn the needs of Magnolias and particularly what to do about late spring frosts but the rewards will be commensurate. The Botanics tree is seen against a background of evergreens which afford some wind shelter and it is on a slope so that cold air

can drain from it. The flowers are whiter than white, lily-esque, fragrant and before the leaves. In a good year it should become a site of compulsory pilgrimage for all MSPs.

Malus 'Golden Hornet' Of garden origin pre-1949 S

This is a deservedly popular crab as much for the masses of roundish, bright yellow fruit lasting well into the winter as for the flowers which are white flushed pink and more than an inch across.

Malus hupehensis Hupeh crab Japan, China 1900 S-M

We have had some wonderful trees from Hupeh. I knew of a whimsical Hampshire owner who devoted an entire grove of his estate to Hupeh trees. None is better than this crab although it is undeservedly uncommon. Alan Mitchell reports that Ernest Wilson thought it "the finest of all the flowering trees he sent from China". The bark is interestingly flaky, but the tree's chief renown lies in the big, white, fragrant flowers covering it from tip almost to toe. The best tree I know is at Whittinghame Tower.

Malus 'John Downie' Of garden origin 1875 S-M

Of the myriad (and confusing) flowering crabs available, John Downie is perhaps the most popular and deservedly so. The May blossom is pink in bud opening into smallish white petals with golden anthers. The fruit is, however, why you would grow John Downie; profuse, egg-shaped, ripening yellow, orange, red, glistening and delicious as crab apple jelly.

Malus kansuensis Kansu crab China 1910 S

I know nothing of this tree other than what I read in Bean's 'Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles', and what I see of the tree in the RBG. It is tidy, as many crabs are not. It has a splendid flaky bark and, so far as I can see, no bad habits. I misread the label at first, thinking this a crab from Kansas but, no, it is from Kansu province of China (and Hupeh and Szechwan). There are various sources for it listed in the Plant Finder (that wonderful annual publication from the RHS which has, or should have, opened the doors slammed shut by your average Garden centre).

Malus tschonoskii Pillar apple Japan 1897 S-M

The pillar apple has been much used as a street tree in the last decade or so, for which purpose it is well suited in shape (upright, narrow), toughness and minimal fruit. These are the trees in, for example, Forrest Road. It was also much used by Geoff Brooks round University properties in the same period. It is a neat tree and the autumn colours are excellent. Perhaps, given that is now such a feature outside the garden, its main function within is in a supporting role.

Mespilus germanica Medlar South-west Asia South-east Europe S

I do not know that anyone in Edinburgh gets around to eating medlar even after it has been exposed to frost or bletted in the approved manner, but the persistent sepals at the base of the fruit are always interesting, the leaves are large, wrinkled and dark green and the tree itself makes a characteristic, spreading, blackish mound. There is a good tree at Carberry and others are occasionally and pleasantly encountered around the city. Selected forms, 'Nottingham' for example, are to be preferred to the type - larger fruit, larger leaves, larger tree.

Metasequoia glyptostroboides Dawn redwood China 1948 M

Dawn redwoods need the warmth of southern Britain for fastest growth but, as I have argued throughout, that is not necessarily an asset. I know some twenty Lothian trees which, meanwhile, fit comfortably into their surroundings. They benefit from side shelter, which may also help to hide the tree in winter when it tends to look like a bundle of peasticks. One other caveat - some trees flute so badly they look misshapen. I do not know how to judge whether a young tree will turn into a fluter. Since they propogate easily from cuttings, perhaps the answer is to grow ten and select the best.

Morus nigra Mulberry Western Asia c1500 S

Anyone doubting the willingness of Black mulberry to grow in Scotland, should visit the vigorous tree at Luffness or, for that matter, the tree near the bird cage in the Cooper Park, Elgin. I know of three planted in Edinburgh in recent years which, after a slow start, are beginning to motor. Fruit should not be expected for twenty years but then is likely to be copious and delicious, as is the case with the mulberry planted by the Queen Mother in the garden of Haddington House.

Nothofagus antarctica Antarctic beech Argentina, Chile 1830 S

A tree which grows in sight of the Magellan Straits is likely to prove hardy in Scotland, and so it is. The branching system is interesting - somewhat like *Cotoneaster horizontalis* - the leaves are tiny and crinkled (and deciduous), the bark is marked with bands of conspicuous lenticels. Altogether this is a most desirable small tree. There are examples in the RBG, at Biggar Park and Preston Hall, to say nothing of Achamore, Crathes, Crarae et al.

Nothofagus pumilio Lenga Argentina, Chile 1946 S

The RBG has an excellent collection of Southern beeches - a highly enjoyable few hours can be spent looking at them. Do include the semi-evergreen New Zealander *N. fusca* in the little-visited corner beyond the rock garden. My favourite by far is this tree, the Lenga. It is not unlike *N. antarctica* in having small deciduous leaves but with its own almost indefinable jizz. Amazingly, although the Lenga covers great swathes of Argentina, it appears not to have been introduced to Britain until 1946.

Parrotia persica Persian ironwood Caucasus 1841 S

A friend suggests the Persian ironwood is not really a tree - often true, but it can (and should) be trained to a single trunk since the bark is as much to be enjoyed as the autumn show. Its Caucasus origin nearly guarantees health and hardiness. *Parrotia*, named incidentally after a M. Parrot, is a Wych hazel, producing small bunches of red stamens on the late winter leafless shoots. Whether tree or shrub, it is not uncommon.

Picea omorika Serbian spruce Serbia 1889 M-L

If most spruces are too big for the garden or uninteresting (or both), this is not true of young Blue Colorado nor Brewer spruces. The latter at Dawyck, was the there the first to be introduced in Britain. The best spruce for any urban setting is this Serbian tree, the tall, narrow, often blue-green, columnar form, so common and effective in continental, particularly German, gardens. In its native limestone mountains, it may need less water at its root than other spruces.

Pinus bungeana Lacebark pine China 1846 S

The rule of thumb says pines need less rainfall than spruces or silver firs so grow better in east than west Scotland. Most outgrow the garden unless on a short rotation. This neat (in our conditions) pine from north China proves the exception. Its reputation is 'very hardy' but 'rather slow', so you may have to wait for the conical tree to form but from the start its main feature, very unusual in a pine, will be apparent - the bark, which Allan Coombes calls "grey-green and creamy-white". The RBG's lacebark is in the conifer section behind the west lodge.

Pinus densiflora Japanese red pine Japan 1854 M

We are fortunate. Without too much effort we can go and enjoy Scots pine - or Scotch fir as Sir Walter Scott preferred to call it - in its proper setting at Rannoch or Ballochbuie or Rothiemurchus or Affric or wherever. For this reason I am disinclined to grow it in the garden unless for some particular sentimental reason, but there is an alternative. This is the Japanese red pine. It has the same red bark but will not reach the same dimensions. This is the elegant, spreading pine in the centre of the new Chinese garden in the RBG.

Pinus parviflora Japanese white pine Japan 1861 S-M

There are various forms of this highly decorative pine, some capable of reaching 80', most confining themselves to going out sideways with a final height of perhaps 30'. The needles are short, noticeably blue and white, in bundles of fives. There is profuse coning from an early age. The overall effect is satisfyingly Japanese.

Populus lasiocarpa Chinese necklace poplar China 1900 M

One would not normally think twice before banning all poplars from a small garden - too big, too brittle, too greedy for water. Yet I am encouraged by the entertaining trees at Dawyck, Carberry and the Hirsel to make an exception in the case of the Chinese necklace poplar as a foliage tree where there is a modicum of space - leaves as big as soup plates, gaunt branches, stout twigs. Not a tree that you are going to pass without noticing. It is exceptional amongst poplars in having male and female flowers on the same tree, though usually so far out of reach as makes no odds.

Prunus avium Gean Native M-L

The gean will go on growing bigger long after most other cherries have stopped, so it must have space - though half of it can be over the pavement for the pleasure of passers by. A big wild cherry - mazzard is an alternative name - in full flower or in autumn beauty is unmissable. Some people prefer the double version which flowers about a fortnight later when the leaves have unfurled. I prefer the white cloud.

Prunus maackii Manchurian bird cherry Manchuria, Korea 1910 M

As befits a tree from Manchuria this cherry is particularly suitable in Scotand. The biggest in Britain is down the bank of the remarkable Cluny House, near Aberfeldy. It is grown principally for its shining, peeling, honey-coloured young bark. The white fragrant flowers are in clustered racemes, not unlike our own bird cherry, followed by tiny back berries which are exceeding bitter. There is an oldish tree in the RBG but I have come across none elsewhere in the Lothians - a situation which ought to be corrected. They grow readily from seed, and fast. Maack was a Russian botanist.

Prunus padus Bird cherry Native M

I fell in love with bird cherry one brilliant May morning on the flood-plain of the Spey below Ballindalloch. The air was infused with a delicious almond scent from the white flower-tassels adorning every bright green bush. Moving bird cherry to the garden goes counter to my rule of enjoying native trees in their own habitat, but so be it. There is a var *Watereri*, with longer racemes but I think of it as the coarser tree.

Prunus sargentii Sargent's cherry Japan, Sakhalin, Korea 1890 S-M

This cherry is to be seen throughout the Lothians as the earliest and best for autumn colour, but also puts on a good spring show when pink flowers open with bronze leaves. During the growing season, Sargent's cherry is identifiable because of the way the leaves hang. To my eye these, and many other cherries, look uncomfortable when they have been grafted onto a gean at circa 5'. Ground level suits much better.

Prunus serrula Tibetan cherry Western China 1908 S-M

This splendid tree is now well known and widely planted. When we lived in Elgin I grew one immediately outside the kitchen window so that we could enjoy the bark all year long, and I recommend such a location. I was taught that tearing the bark was bad practice but that patting and rubbing were desirable. The glossiest, most mahogany bark is on younger trees.

Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis' Winter cherry Japan pre1909

If the Winter cherry had been found or invented only recently - it is thought to have been a naturally occurring hybrid, extensively cultivated in numerous forms - it would be the wonder of the gardening world. So we should perhaps renew our admiration and respect for a tree which goes on throwing delicate flowers, impervious to an Edinburgh winter.

Prunus 'Tai Haku' Great white cherry Cultivated M

Bias comes strongly into play in choosing Japanese cherries. Since my bias is in favour of large, single, white flowers opening among bronze foliage and held where I can see them, 'Tai Haku' is top of my list. It is a wide-spreading tree and dull when not in flower or autumn colour, so it may suffice to make an annual pilgrimage to the RBG (south boundary) or elsewhere where this wonderful tree has space to breathe.

Prunus x yedoensis Yoshino cherry Cultivated in Japan 1902 S

I associate Yoshino cherries with Carberry and Tyninghame where several grow in perfect surroundings. Unlike those of so many cherries, their leaves strike me as pleasant throughout the year, and are enhanced in season by smallish, long-stalked, red to black, bitter-sweet fruit. The flowers come early, before the leaf; small, numerous, blush-white and scented.

Pseudolarix amabilis Golden larch China 1853 S

I know of only two golden larch, both in the RBG. All the experts say it will be slow and at risk to spring frost in its early years. The reward if successful will be such as to justify a long struggle. I was encouraged to see Golden larch offered by Ardkinglas Nursery and have set off on that track. The unexpected bonus is that Golden larch turns out to be wonderfully attractive while only one foot tall.

Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer' Seedling selected from the type S-M

I take this tree on trust following the praise of the hugely well-informed Alan Mitchell. This is what he says. "It has the following remarkable combination of star points: it is robust in any soil; it bears masses of heads of flowers before the leaves unfold; the leaf-buds expand bright silver-white; the leaves are a soft green and through the summer some often turn yellow, orange and red; autumn colours are bright yellow, orange and red". There is a recently planted tree in the Grange cemetery.

Pyrus communis Common pear Of garden origin S-M

A visit to the pear collection in the RBG, especially in spring, suggests that there are many more species from this benign genus which could usefully go into wider cultivation. None however are superior, all-in-all, to the common pear which is such an asset to the gardens of the Grange and elsewhere. Pears have something of interest throughout the year, not least the dark grey bark, cracked into small plates. If a pear tree has to be felled, do remember that the wood is first-class for carving - fine-grained, smooth, reddish-orange.

Pyrus nivalis Snow pear Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Greece 19th century S

The Latin and the English names celebrate not only the flowers but the young leaves which are white and woolly like some dwarf willows. This elegant small tree must soon come into wide recognition.

Quercus pontica Armenian or Pontine oak Caucasus 1885 S

Most oaks are far too big for the average garden. Encouraged by the example in the RBG, I am tempted to see what might be done with a Daimyo oak, *Quercus dentata*, although it would be risky. But there should be no difficulty with the Armenian oak, given its origins and the vigour of the tree-bushes at Dawyck and the RBG. The leaves are the thing - huge, flat, bright green, with elegant parallel veins ending in sharp teeth. In autumn they turn yellow-brown and fall with a clatter.

Robinia pseudoacacia Locust tree Eastern North America c1636 S-M

Alan Mitchell was exceptionally dismissive of the Locust or False Acacia, describing it as "graceless, rough and brittle; early into leaf and early to shed without noticeable change of colour" etc. For once I think he was wrong, particularly in the north where the tree does not become enormous and where pinnate leaves are at a premium. Moreover the bark seems to me pleasantly fissured and, later, gnarled. I know a score or so of satisfactory Robinias in the Lothians, none better than the tree in the avenue at Yester. The old tree in Ormiston village is, alas, going back. It flowered prodigiously in 1997.

Salix alba 'Sericea' Silver willow Of garden origin S-M

The silver willow, variously catalogued and labelled as '*Sericea*' or '*Argentea*' is a particularly silvery form of the native white willow, itself more silvery-green than white. There are a fair number in Edinburgh gardens and almost always a pleasure to meet. The exceptions are in those years when willows become defoliated. There is an additional pleasure in knowing that propagation via cuttings is particularly easy.

Salix daphnoides Violet willow Central and Eastern Europe 1829 S

If left to its own devices the violet willow will make a neat, conical tree of perhaps 30'. The leaves are long, thin, a cheerful dark-green on top and glaucous below. The tree is worth growing for the leaves alone but an additional pleasure is from the violet shoots covered with a blue-white bloom. Hard pruning results in vigorous shoots closer to view and touch. It is quite acceptable to rub the bloom with a finger.

Salix pentandra Bay willow Native S-M

The bay willow is the least well known of the native tree willows, which is surprising given its merits - glossy shoots and glossy deep-green leaves. There is always a little spurt of pleasure in finding the bay willow - at Nine Mile Burn for example. It is of the easiest possible cultivation and, of course, entirely hardy.

Salix x sepulcralis 'Chrysocoma' Weeping willow Of nursery origin M-L

I include the weeping willow with some misgivings because it can overwhelm small gardens and is adept at finding any cracks in your water pipes. Given really adequate space however, there are few trees which yield so much pleasure, winter and summer. The taxonomists have decided that it is not a variety of *S. alba* nor of *S. babylonica* but probably a hybrid between them.

Sciadopitys verticillata Japanese umbrella pine Japan 1861 S

My first encounter with this odd tree was in the Quarry Gardens at Gordon Castle, Fochabers. My second was noticing a tree in the small front garden of a roadside house in Inverurie. Since then I have never not enjoyed a meeting - always curiously unexpected. Like the Monkey puzzle it is distinctive and interesting even as a very young specimen. I do not understand why they are uncommon.

Sophora japonica Pagoda tree China, Korea 1753 S-M

I do not know what risks are attached to trying to start a Pagoda tree here but it is worth persevering if you would like a smallish, pinnate-leafed tree with a furrowed bark and a long history in China and Japan. There is a beauty in the RBG - across the lawn from the glass houses - and at Carberry and in the walled garden at Tyninghame. There is a second, larger tree at the RBG - hidden away behind shrubbery against a wall - thus demonstrating that some protection is helpful. Notice that the buds are enclosed in the swollen leaf bases.

Sorbus alnifolia Alder whitebeam Japan 1892?

The largest Alder whitebeam in Britain is at Dawyck, indicating both that it is completely hardy and liable, eventually, to grow too large. But it will yield a lot of pleasure along the way and can always be removed before becoming an embarrassment. At all times of the year it can be seen to be a member of the rose family because the fruit is persistent - or at least it is on the young tree at Newbattle Abbey. The leaves are neither like a rowan nor a whitebeam but have the shape and parallel veins of a hornbeam or Italian alder. They turn orange and red.

Sorbus americana American rowan Eastern North America Unknown S

The American rowan is included essentially on the strength of the young tree in the car park at Dawyck which is a neat, manifest rowan throughout the year then, in autumn, is weighed down with huge swags of red berries. There is another, less prolific but equally enjoyable, in the RBG. It does seem to be a species eminently worth trying, especially from seed.

Sorbus commixta Scarlet rowan Japan, Korea 1906? S-M

If you have space for one rowan only, this should be it especially the selection 'Embley' which previously had specific status as *S. discolor*. Both are neat trees, the former vase-like, the latter more open. Autumn colour is brilliant and the fruiting prolific. There are several scarlet rowans at Dawyck, at the RBG and on the drive up to the big house at Tyninghame.

Sorbus domestica True service tree Mediterranean Romans? M-L

A full-grown Service tree is likely to be too big to fit into the average garden - though no bigger than the limes, beeches, horse chestnuts or walnuts present already - but there are large spaces around flats and the like where this deeply satisfying tree would be an asset, as a glance at the RBG tree will confirm. It resembles a big pear in point of silhouette and bark but with the airiness of pinnate foliage. The fruit, it is said, is amongst those which must decay slightly in order to become edible - though the little pears in the Botanics remain resolutely wooden.

Sorbus 'Joseph Rock' Probably China Of nursery origin S

Joseph Rock has been widely planted across local gardens over the last decade or so and has been much admired. It is an extremely well-behaved tree - regular, with small leaves and lemon-yellow fruit. The autumn display is spectacular - orange, red and purple in various combinations.

Sorbus scalaris Ladder leaf rowan China 1904 S

I am surprised by the paucity of ladder-leafed rowans and hope there will be more in due course. The tree has certainly a powerful wish to grow outwards as much as upwards but given sideways space this is a very enjoyable rowan with many small, deep-green, glossy leaflets gathered into rosettes. The flowers and fruits are individually small but gathered into large clusters.

Sorbus thibetica 'John Mitchell' China, Himalayas 1938? M

Of all the whitebeams, this is the one with the largest leaves and the roundest. They are glossy green on top and silvery and woolly underneath. It makes a startling foliage tree but may be difficult to fit in. I am in two minds whether I do not prefer my whitebeams with smaller leaves. Amongst interesting possibilities is the rare Scottish native *S. rupicola*. One specimen grows in the Holyrood Park. Another - most handsome - is near the Arolla pine at Dawyck.

Sorbus torminalis Wild service tree Native M

Colin Mclean has planted the wild service or Chequers tree in some numbers in the Bawsinch reserve of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, where it grows freely, adding its maple-like leaves to the ensemble. There are two trees in the Bush Estate and one - substantial - at Carberry, overhanging the grass left of the entrance drive. If you had space for a gean, say, this would be an interesting alternative. Although I knew the wild service in the New Forest well enough, I never found any fruit worth the trouble.

Sorbus vilmorinii Vilmorin's rowan China 1905 S-M

I tend to think of this as the smallest of the rowans until remembering the handsome tree at Dawyck which is at least as large as the Scarlet rowan, admittedly under ideal conditions, down by the burn. Be that as it may, Vilmorin's rowan is handsome in leaf - numerous small leaflets - and in fruit - red changing to pink and eventually white, or at least white flushed pink. This is the best rowan where space is limited - despite the Dawyck tree.

Stuartia pseudocamellia Deciduous camellia Japan 1874 S

I am a little hesitant in recommending the deciduous camellia. There are good trees at Dawyck and Carberry, another at Branklyn but few that I have seen elsewhere and some struggling. If you have a sunny, sheltered corner it may be worth persevering almost for the orange bark alone, regarding the elegant white scattering of flowers and the autumn colours as a bonus.

Tetradium hupehensis Chinese euodia China 1908 S-M

This is not a well-known species, although the biggest in Britain is in Pershire and the RBG tree is plain to see by the path parallel to the south boundary. The bark is markedly smooth and grey. The flowers are in flat heads, strongly scented in July and August when most flowering trees are long over. It was formerly classified in the genus Euodia. There does not seem to be much difference between *T. hupehensis* and *T. daniellii* other than the colour of the fruit - red or purple respectively.

Tilia monglica Mongolian lime Mongolia, China 1904 M

The only Mongolian lime I know in the Lothians is a distinguished tree in the RBG but the leaf is so elegant - taper pointed lobes not unlike a fresh green maple - that it seems worth the risk and not much of a risk given the origin. The books suggest that it might make 50'-60' in a century. The flowers are small, yellow and fragrant, in clusters of about 10.

Tilia oliveri Oliver's lime China 1900 M-L

It seems likely that Oliver's lime will eventually outgrow all but the largest garden but I include it on the strength of the very enjoyable youngsters at Dawyck and the RBG. It is unusual for experts to agree. Alan Mitchell says "In some ways this is the most choice of all limes". Roy Lancaster says "One of the most beautiful of all limes". Those should be recommendations enough.

Toona (formerly Cedrela) sinensis Chinese cedar China 1862 M

I first saw and admired this tree in the grounds of the University of Wales at Aberystwyth. It had been planted by Basil Fox who had learnt his trade at the RBG and there, I imagine, been persuaded of the virtues and hardiness of this Chinese tree. It is not of course a cedar but a member of the mahogany family. The leaves are large and pinnate, not unlike those of a Tree of Heaven. They are cooked and eaten in China. Wrenching handfuls of leaves off the Botanics tree would not go down well so you must grow your own.

Tsuga canadensis Eastern hemlock Eastern North America 1736 S-M

Alan Mitchell is sniffy about this tree largely on the grounds that it does not grow straight and vigorously like its western counterpart. But I like it, especially when it has become, as at Arniston and Dawyck, sprawling like a hugely overgrown bush. The bark is dark and cedar-like. The crown is dense. So here is a well-behaved evergreen which could be seen more often. A pleasant detail is that there is a single row of needles along the top of the shoot, all upside down.

Alistair Scott 5 September 1999