

# How to Use the Plant Finders

In each chapter you'll find one or more "Plant Finders"—the core of the book's reference material. These are lists of special plants from around the country and world that have unique attributes to the chapter's topic. The plants are listed alphabetically by their Latin name, but the most frequently used common name is also provided.

The approximate height and width of each plant is given, along with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) recommended range of zones in which the plant will thrive. For most plants, icons are provided indicating, for example, that

the tree or shrub resists being eaten by deer, provides food for birds, resists strong winds, tolerates drought, withstands clayey soils, or tolerates sandy (low-nutrient) soils (more about these icons later).

All plants are not all good. Therefore, after each plant's initial listing there appears a short notation of the special attributes and pertinent limitations of the tree or shrub. For example, some beautiful or practical trees are well behaved in one climate but "escape" to be rampant weeds in other parts of the country. Some of these exotic intruders have been excluded from the book altogether;

others have a detailed description of where they should be grown or *not* grown. If a highly useful tree or shrub is suited for more than one purpose, it will be described in full in one Plant Finder and then cross-referenced in other Plant Finders.

The plants in each Plant Finder are only a basic starter list. Nature offers a much greater variety and complexity than any chart can reflect. Also, elevation, latitude, and many other factors will influence the type of climate from one part of a zone to another. Be observant and learn what thrives in your town and neighborhood. Check with local

nurseries and with your nearest cooperative extension and/or Master Gardeners group for other options.

Sometimes, experts from around the country offered different judgments. Whenever, for example, one regional expert listed a plant as resistant to deer browsing but others listed the same plant as being susceptible, I took the conservative route and did not give the plant a deer icon. Always double-check with local experts if you have any concerns about the appropriateness of a plant in this book. Any error with regard to entering or combining the regional experts' input is solely my responsibility.

Here's what the icons mean:



**DEER** indicates some degree of resistance to deer eating the foliage.

However, this is affected by many factors, such as weather and the deer population (cold winters and overcrowding make deer less choosy). I've used several national references to double-check this information, but when in doubt you should check with your local experts.



**BIRDS** means the tree or shrub supplies fruits, berries, nuts, or seeds for all birds except hummingbirds (which are in a separate list on p. 90). Almost all trees and shrubs are attractive to birds for shelter, roosting, and nest-building, but the icon focuses on food supply. Bird feeding will vary considerably from place to place, so observe your local bird activity or consult a birder.



**WIND** indicates a tree or shrub inherently resistant to wind, snow, or ice damage if properly planted.



**DROUGHT** is a relative concept. In the Midwest, 3 weeks without rain in July is a drought. In the arid West, virtually rainless summers can stretch out to 5 or 6 months. When a plant is marked with an icon to denote drought resistance, it usually pertains to the worst-case scenarios of summer-dry California. If the plant survives such a drought with little or no irrigation, then it *may* thrive in other climates with rainier summers. (However, too much rain can cause root rots, mildew, and fungus, which

may disfigure or kill certain drought-resistant plants. Be sure to check with local resources for details pertaining to your climate.)



**CLAY** refers to heavy clay (also called gumbo), which is tough on the roots of most plants. A finely textured soil (clay, but not gumbo) is more forgiving and may have plenty of nutrients, but it's hard for water to penetrate it (once the soil is moist, however, it holds moisture for a long time). Any plants marked with this icon will grow decently in heavy clay soils but will thrive with better drainage.



**SANDY** indicates the plant can grow in a sandy soil that provides rapid drainage, is low in fertility (added fertilizer is easily washed away), is rather deep (not sitting on top of heavy clay), and has little humus. Plants marked with this icon have roots systems that can support them in this looser soil.

## Plant Finders

| Latin name<br>COMMON NAME   | Latin name<br>COMMON NAME   | Latin name<br>COMMON NAME   |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| USDA ZONES: _____   | USDA ZONES: _____   | USDA ZONES: _____   |
| SIZE: _____   | SIZE: _____   | SIZE: _____   |
| COMMENTS: _____   | COMMENTS: _____   | COMMENTS: _____   |
| _____   | _____   | _____   |
| _____   | _____   | _____   |
| _____   | _____   | _____   |