

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

MEMO TO INDUSTRY NO. 23-03

**DATE:** MAY 1, 2023

**TO:** DEVELOPERS, ARCHITECTS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, AND ARBORISTS

**FROM:** NATHAN IMM, CITY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT, PLANNING & ZONING  


**SUBJECT:** PLANT SELECTION LIMITATIONS FOR GRADING AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

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### ISSUE:

The City of Alexandria currently has a significant imbalance in the diversity of tree species within public Rights-of-Way (ROW) and private lands. The overplanting of the species listed below puts the health of the City's tree canopy at risk for significant outbreaks of pests and diseases. City staff have also observed that the overuse of these species has served to highlight certain aspects of their growth and biology that has led to a higher incidence of mortality and demands for maintenance, reducing both the quality and quantity of the City's canopy and requiring an increased expenditure for tree maintenance.

In order to rectify the situation, the City is recommending against the use of the following tree species. For Grading Plans and other plans with low tree quantities, the City will not approve plantings of any of these species. For Development Plans with proposed plantings greater than 50 trees, no more than 5% of all proposed trees may be of these species. These restrictions include all cultivars, selections, and hybrids of these species.

### Species of Concern / Restricted Use:

Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)  
Nellie Stevens Holly (*Ilex x Nellie R Stevens*)\*  
London Plane Tree (*Platanus x acerifolia*)\*\*  
Willow Oak (*Quercus phellos*)  
American Elm (*Ulmus americana*)

*\*Restrictions do not apply to American Holly (*Ilex opaca*)*

*\*Restrictions do not apply to American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)*

At this time, the City continues to monitor the percentage of the City’s canopy consisting of Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), River Birch (*Betula nigra*), Kwanzan Cherry (*Prunus ‘Kanzan’*), Yoshino Cherry (*Prunus x yeodensis*), and Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) to determine whether similar restrictions may be needed for these species as well. While the City is not currently restricting their use, substitutions are encouraged where feasible.

Additionally, in recent years several trees have been significantly overplanted that are listed as invasive on one or more of the reference lists provided via the links within the Landscape Guidelines. The following are listed to highlight their classification as invasive species, which are not allowed to be planted in any quantity through any permitting or approvals process. This list is not meant to be inclusive, for the full listing please refer to the links on the Landscape Guidelines page of the City website.

Commonly planted trees now listed as Invasive:

- Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*)
- Crape Myrtle (*Lagerstromia indica*)
- Chinese Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
- Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumila*)

**APPLICABILITY:**

This policy is applicable to all Grading Plans, Development Site Plans, and Development Special Use Permits. Where planting is required within Special Use Permits or other required approvals for development and construction, this policy will apply. In cases of restoration of natural areas, the review and recommendations of the Natural Resources Division of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA) shall take precedence over this memo.

**RELATIONSHIP TO LANDSCAPE GUIDELINES:**

This Memorandum to Industry is an extension of the recommendations and policies of the City of Alexandria’s Landscape Guidelines, most recently adopted in February 2019. This memo does not alter any portion of the Landscape Guidelines that are not specifically mentioned in the above species restrictions. Invasive species may still not be planted nor will their presence on a site account for credit toward canopy cover, whether listed above or otherwise listed on the reference pages provided within the Landscape Guidelines.

This action to restrict the plantings of the above-listed tree species is intended to be temporary, until such time as the diversity of the City’s tree canopy is considered to be rebalanced to help avoid outbreaks of pests and diseases.

Suggested substitutes for these tree species are listed on the City of Alexandria website under the City of Alexandria 2019 Landscape Guidelines. Suggested substitutes may change over time.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:**

Grading and Concept plans that are submitted after May 1, 2023 must comply with this policy.