

UNDERSTORY TREES

What is an understory tree?

Understory trees are ones that grow on the forest floor, below the canopy. They are protected from intense sunlight, extreme winds and temperature changes, including ground temperature. The forest floor maintains a more consistent temperature than open ground. In an open, exposed area, ground temperature can fluctuate depending on the sun, wind, and weather.

Examples of popular understory trees:

- Japanese Maple
- Flowering Dogwood
- Beech
- Redbud (*Eastern Redbud* tolerates full sun, but needs protection from the winter wind)
- Other trees with variegated foliage, such as the variegated Norway Maple

Japanese Maple, Flowering Dogwood, Beech, and specialty Redbuds carry a 60 day warranty

Successful planting of understory trees:

For the most success when planting in an urban landscape, we should try to mimic what naturally occurs in Mother Nature whenever possible.

1.) Sun exposure: understory trees need protection from the hot, afternoon sun. The East side of the house is best for this, unless you have bigger trees that will provide shade from the South and West from 1pm on. The North side of the house is mostly protected from the sun in the summer, but can be the worst side of the house in the winter.

2.) Wind exposure: Here in the Midwest, our harshest winds are in the winter, especially from the North and West. So, even if the area is protected from the sun in the summer in these locations, you must consider the exposure to the wind in the winter.

You can apply *Wilt Pruf* to the branches through the winter to help protect the dormant buds, but it would be best to plant in a protected area.

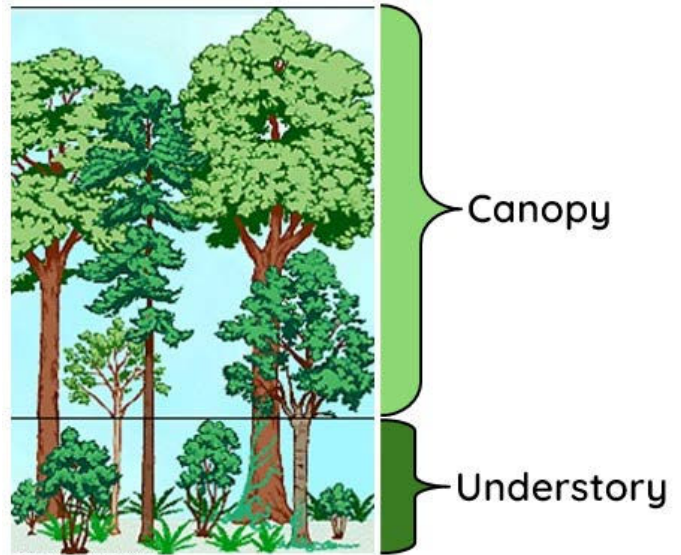


Photo credit: Britannica

3.) Temperature Fluctuations: In their natural environment, ambient and soil temperatures stay fairly consistent. Here in the Midwest, our temperatures fluctuate throughout the day, and can have vast differences on a daily basis. We can't do much to control that. However, we can limit the extreme ground temperature changes by having mulch as a soil cover, instead of rock. Mulch is the closest thing we can use to mimic the forest floor. It helps keep the soil & roots cooler, retains moisture, and helps maintain a more consistent temperature.

Other things to consider:

-Here in the Midwest, our summer sun is much more intense than other areas. Ignore a tag that says "Full Sun" on any of these plants, because our definition of full sun is different from the rest of the country.

-Proper planting practices are key in any new planting situation. If it's heavy clay soil, amend it with compost and perlite. Apply *Myke* to the roots when planting, and water in with *Superthrive* afterwards. Keep the soil moist, but don't overwater. Sprinklers provide only a shallow watering, so be sure to give them an occasional deep watering to encourage a deeper, drought-resistant root system.

<<<Scan here to see in-depth planting and care guides on our website