

Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)



The Zelkova is a tough urban tree for residential shade and street plantings. It has a spreading, generally upright branching, and can grow up to 80 feet tall with a spread of up to 70 feet. This tree will tolerate most soil types including those with a pH to about 7.5, but prefers deep, moist, well drained soils. It does well in full sun.

The Zelkova is often considered a good replacement for the American Elm but the crown is shorter and more rounded than the Elm. The bark is a smooth, reddish brown when young with prominent cherry-like lenticels. As the tree ages, the outer bark is gray-brown and often exfoliating exposing an orangish inner bark. Medium green leaves turn to shades of yellow, orange, brown, deep red to reddish-purple in the fall.

Unlike the American Elm, The Zelkova is resistant to Dutch Elm disease with good resistance to elm leaf beetle and Japanese beetle. Young trees are susceptible to frost so transplanting should be done in the spring. Pruning should be done in fall. Branches should remain less than 1/2 the diameter of the trunk to maintain a strong form. Planting uses for the Zelkova include residential lawns, as a street tree, or in a parking lot island.

Its size limits its use as a street tree here in New Albany, but it is a good tree for building canopy where possible. You will see a number of the Zelkova trees planted in the urban forest locally.