M. Magnolia grandiflora, Southern Magnolia, is a widely planted flowering tree in our area. It is a Florida native and well adapted to our climate. Southern Magnolia bears large, extremely fragrant white flowers in late spring and summer. Southern Magnolias are large trees and can grow 30-60 feet tall. Seed grown trees are variable in their growth habit, flower period and size, and leaf size and color. There are also many cultivars of this tree available with different growth and flowering habits. ‘D.D. Blanchard’ has become one of the most popular varieties. It has dark green leaves with orangish-brown undersides. It is also a faster growing variety. ‘Little Gem’ is the smallest cultivar. It only grows 10-20 feet tall and the flowers and leaves are half the size of a normal Southern Magnolia. It also has a longer flowering period and can flower sporadically from summer until Christmas. ‘Alta’ is a newer selection with a strong upright form and narrower leaves. ‘Greenback’ has narrower leaves that are cupped and green on both sides. It also has a very dense growth habit. ‘Coco’ has a pyramidal shape and is a very heavy grower. ‘Majestic Beauty’ has very large leaves and flowers that can be up to 12” across. ‘Bracken’s Brown Beauty’ has a very dense and compact growth habit with leaves that have a rusty brown underside. Southern Magnolias are drought tolerant once they are well established but need to be watered well when they are first planted.

Nageia nagi, the Nagi or Broadleaf Podocarpus Tree, is an evergreen conifer that can reach 50 to 70 feet. It is a moderate grower with a dense and upright growth habit. The leaves are dark green, leathery, and shiny. Female trees bear seeds with a bluish-black covering. Nagi is fairly drought tolerant and can grow in full sun or deep shade. Nagi is also very wind resistant. Of all the trees here at Leu Gardens, Nagi was the best performer after the three hurricanes of 2004. There are about a dozen mature specimens at different locations in the Gardens. Nagi is native to southern Japan, southern China, and Taiwan. It was also formerly known as Podocarpus nagi.

Peltophorum dubium, or Yellow Poinciana, is a common sight in the older neighborhoods around the Orlando area. It bears brilliant yellow flowers during summer and is a beautiful tree when in full bloom. It is often confused with the Golden Rain Tree, Koelreuteria elegans ssp. formosana, which flowers later in the year in fall and is not recommended for planting, as it is very invasive. Yellow Poinciana is a fast growing tree, reaching 30-50 feet tall. It is also very drought tolerant, but can be difficult to locate in local nurseries. A related species, Peltophorum pteryocarpum, Copperpod, looks similar and is more commonly available. It is not generally recommended, as it is tender to cold and suitable only for the warmest sections of the street.
Magnolia grandiflora ‘D. D. Blanchard’

Central Florida. Yellow Poinciana is native from southern Brazil to Uruguay. *Pistacia chinenisa*, Chinese Pistache, is a drought tolerant tree that can grow 30-40 feet tall. The tree has a broad, round growth habit. It is deciduous and the leaves turn a brilliant orange-red in late fall or early winter. This is one of the best trees for central Florida whose leaves develop good autumn color. Chinese Pistache is native to central China, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

*Quercus myrtifolia*, Myrtle Oak, is a little used Florida native. It somewhat resembles the very common but over planted Southern Live Oak, *Q. virginiana*. Myrtle Oak is an evergreen tree that grows 20 to 30 feet tall. The leaves are oval shaped, about an inch long, and dark green and leathery. Myrtle Oak is very drought tolerant and also tolerant of very poor, sandy soils. Another ornamental but little used oak is *Quercus michauxi*, the Swamp Chestnut Oak. It is a deciduous tree growing 50 to 100 feet tall. The leaves are dark green and can be up to a foot in length. They are toothed along the edges but not lobed. Swamp Chestnut Oak can tolerate wet soils but is moderately drought tolerant once it is established. It is native to the eastern United States down into the northern sections of central Florida.

Tabebuia impetiginosa is known as the Pink or Purple Trumpet Tree, native from northern Mexico down to Argentina. It bears large clusters of trumpet shaped flowers in late winter or early spring. These flowers range in color from light pink to purple though most of the trees found in central Florida are the pink form. This is a fairly fast growing tree that reaches 20 to 30 feet tall. It is very drought tolerant and is usually deciduous during winter.

*Taxodium distichum*, the Bald Cypress, is a Florida native that has proven to be an excellent street tree. This deciduous conifer is a moderate to fast grower and usually reaches 70 to 100 feet tall when mature. The feathery, pinnate foliage helps give it a soft appearance. The foliage often turns a nice shade of orange before dropping in winter. Though this tree is native to swamps and wetlands, it is drought tolerant once it is established. It also does not usually produce the “knees” outside of a swampy location. Bald Cypress has proven to be an excellent urban tree and can be used in a wide range of situations, from lakefronts to street trees. Pond Cypress, *T. ascendens*, is a similar native tree, but it has a more narrow growth habit and the foliage is scalier.

Tipuana tipu, Tipu Tree, is a tree that deserves greater use in central Florida. It is native from southern Brazil to Bolivia and is a fast growing tree that reaches 30-50 feet tall. It bears bright yellow flowers in late spring and summer. Once established, it is fairly tolerant of drought and needs little care. The tree has an airy look and produces a nice, filtered shade.

*Ulmus alata*, Winged Elm, is a Florida native that grows 30 to 40 feet tall. This tree has corky wings along the stems and twigs and is deciduous. Winged Elm is very drought tolerant and is fast growing. It has a very dense growth habit and needs little care once it is established.

*Ulmus parvifolia ‘Allee’* is a distinct cultivar of the Chinese Elm. This tree can grow 50 to 70 feet tall. It has an upright spreading growth habit. It is very drought tolerant and deciduous with the tree shedding the leaves in early winter. ‘Allee’ is a much better selection as a street tree than the commonly grown ‘Drake’, which is known as the Chinese Weeping Elm. ‘Drake’ is a poor choice as a street tree as it tends to have a low branching canopy and needs frequent pruning to keep it above traffic. It is also a weak tree and blows over easily in storms. ‘Allee’ is a strong grower and has good wind resistance. *Ulmus parvifolia* is originally native from Korea to China and Japan and Taiwan.

— Eric Schmidt