NATIVE TREES TO PLANT
(compiled by Meredith Fields)

ALWAYS REMEMBER, BEFORE YOU DIG TO PLANT A TREE OR TO REMOVE A DEAD ONE OR DIG FOR ANY REASON, CALL DIGSAFE (1-800-DIGSAFE) TO LOCATE ALL UNDERGROUND LINES!!

LARGE SHADE TREES LIKELY TO DO WELL

In general, these trees grow both tall and wide. They generate shade, take up water, reduce wind, hold soil to decrease erosion, and filter air and water. They are very important supports for local ecosystems of bugs (including bees and butterflies), birds, amphibians, critters… and people. These trees need space to grow, so location needs careful consideration. Other specific considerations are noted.

OAK (Quercus, multiple native species)

Strong trees, storm survivors, long-lived, provide outstanding ecosystem support, all do well in our usual suburban conditions, tolerate salt and are therefore good street trees.
White oak, Red oak, Scarlet oak: tolerate dry conditions.
Swamp white oak, Pin oak: tolerate wet conditions.
In general, red oaks are faster growing than white oaks.

MAPLE (Acer, multiple native species)

Red maple will tolerate wet conditions and floods, is fast-growing, adaptable, and tolerates urban conditions.
Sugar maple tolerates dry conditions, is NOT salt-tolerant and so will do better AWAY from the street. Sugar maple range is moving north, there are mixed opinions on how it will do here in coming years, may hold steady.
Silver maple is likely to do well locally with climate change but vulnerable to breakage.
NOTE regarding maples: Our many Norway maples that were planted around town 40-60 years ago are aging out and must be replaced by other varieties. Norways are not native and have become an invasive species. Because of that they are now illegal to sell, purchase and plant.

AMERICAN ELM (Ulmus americana)

Classic, vase-shaped street or yard tree, fast-growing, many were lost to Dutch elm disease but there are now disease-resistant varieties! These include: Princeton, American Liberty, Valley Forge, Independence, New Harmony.

HICKORY (Carya, mutiple native species)
Species include Mockernut hickory, Pignut hickory, Shagbark hickory
These are large shade trees, slow-growing, host to many butterflies and moths. All are in ranges moving northward into New England and likely to do well.

TULIP TREE (Liriodendron tulipifera)
Very fast growing, grows tall and grows upward more than out, range has been moving north into New England.

AMERICAN LINDEN/BASSWOOD (Tilia americana)
Large shade tree, tolerates wet conditions but will also grow in usual suburban conditions, provides excellent ecosystem support including for pollinators.

AMERICAN BEECH (Fagus grandifolia)
Does better in moist, fertile soil, slower growing than maple, oak or elm, can be subject to attack if not in the right conditions.

BLACK CHERRY (Prunus serotina)
Another native to our woodlands, can grow very tall, can be susceptible to disease but if it survives becomes a magnificent large tree that provides excellent ecosystem support including to many bugs and butterflies.

PITCH PINE (Pinus rigida)
Medium-sized, most likely to do well with warming conditions, currently common on the Cape.
Note on pines: Our towering white pines are likely to become less plentiful as the climate changes, especially under higher-emissions scenarios. It is thought that red pines will have an even harder time and will disappear.

SYCAMORE/AMERICAN PLANE TREE (Platanus occidentalis)
Fast-growing, prefers moist location but will tolerate drought, also tolerates soil compaction and air pollution and thus makes a good sidewalk tree.

KENTUCKY COFFEE TREE (Gymnocladis dioicus)
Good street and yard tree, tolerates both moist and dry conditions, tolerates wind and storms well.

YELLOWWOOD (Cladrastis kentukea)
A good medium-to-large shade tree that has been relatively overlooked, prefers moist conditions but also will tolerate drier sites.

SWEET GUM (Liquidambar styraciflua)
Fast-growing, large tree, prefers full sun and moist conditions but will tolerate dry; drops seed pods with many sharp points not for bare feet.

TUPELO/SOUR GUM/BLACK GUM (Nyssa sylvatica)
Will grow large, prefers moist conditions but will tolerate drier sites

HACKBERRY (Celtis occidentalis)
A good street tree whose range has moved north into our area, tolerates wet and dry conditions and a wide variety of soil conditions, does well in urban environments, provides excellent ecosystem support, appearance is similar to beech.

UNDERSTORY TREES

These are small-to-medium sized trees that do not provide the canopy that the large trees do. They still make very important contributions and can occupy smaller spaces that cannot accommodate larger trees.

ATLANTIC WHITE CEDAR/ARBORVITAE (Thuja occidentalis)
Prefers moist conditions, will tolerate drier ones.

AMERICAN HOLLY (Ilex opaca)
Prefers moist conditions and does better in sheltered spots out of wind.

FLOWERING DOGWOOD (Cornus florida)
Prefers moist soil, and open, sunny locations, needs water during droughts.

SERVICEBERRY (Amelanchier, multiple species)
Tolerates moist to dry conditions, flowers in spring followed by edible berries in June.

PIN CHERRY (Prunus pennsylvanica)
Tolerates moist to fairly dry conditions, sun or part sun, fast growing, host to many butterfly species.

CAROLINA SILVERBELL (Halesia tetraptera)
Prefers moist soil, sun or shade.

REDBUD (Cercis canadensis)
Prefers moist conditons, will do well in usual suburban environment.

MAGNOLIA (Magnolia, multiple species)
Generally prefer moist conditions, species include Sweetbay, Umbrella, and Cucumbertree.

PUSSYWILLOW (Salix discolor)
Fast growing, prefers moist conditions, will do well in usual suburban conditions.

FRINGETREE (Chionanthus virginicus)
Tolerates moist to fairly dry conditions, does best with several hours of sun.

SOURWOOD (Oxydendrum arboreum)
Tolerates moist to fairly dry conditions, sun to light shade.

PAWPAW (Asimina triloba)
Prefers moist, fertile soil and plenty of sun, produces fruit in autumn.

AMERICAN HORNBEAM (Carpinus caroliniana)
Prefers moist to wet conditions (riverbanks, etc), sun to shade.

HOP HORNBEAM (Ostrya virginiana)
Tolerates moist to dry conditions, sun to light shade.

REFERENCES, and for much more information:

William Cullina, Native Trees, Shrubs & Vines: A Guide to Using, Growing, and propagating North American Woody Plants, New England Wildflower Society, 2002.

Donald J. Leopold, Native Plants of the Northeast: A Guide for Gardening & Conservation, Timber Press, 2005.

Douglas W. Tallamy, Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants, Timber Press, 2009.

Douglas W. Tallamy, Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard, Timber Press, 2019.

Richard B. Primack, Walden Warming: Climate Change Comes to Thoreau's Woods, University of Chicago Press, 2014.

NATIVE TREE SOURCES (non-profits)

Middlesex Conservation District Spring Plant Sale
https://middlesexconservation.org/?page_id=38
Note: the 2021 deadline for Spring Plant Sale orders is March 31.

Native Plant Trust
http://www.nativeplanttrust.org/for-your-garden/buy-native-plants/