

95 Favourite Plants for Edible Forest Gardens in Ontario/Québec (Hardiness Zones 4b/5a) – prepared by Bonita Fo

	Layer	Height	Name	Notes	Edible	Medicinal	Fixes Nitrogen	Attracts Beneficial Insects (eg. apiaceae, asteraceae, lamiaceae, brassicaceae)	USDA Hardiness Zone
1	tree/shrub	12-60'	alder (<i>Alnus</i> spp.)	fast-growing for wind-shelter			x		2-8?
2	tree	25-35' std; 5-12' dwarf	apple (<i>Malus domestica</i> or <i>pumila</i>)	edible fruit, good for winter storage (however, can be prone to fire blight)	x				3-8
3	tree	8'	aronia or chokeberry (<i>Aronia</i> or <i>photinia</i> <i>melanocarpa</i>)*	edible fruit	x	x			3-8
4	tree large	75-100'	basswood (<i>Tilia</i> <i>americana</i>)	edible young leaves for salads; flowers for tea; apparently coppices well; on Diana Beresford Kroeger's top 10	x	x			3-9
5	tree large	75-100'	black walnut (<i>Juglans</i> <i>nigra</i>)	edible nuts (though hard to crack); sap can be boiled syrup; nut husks and leaves for medicine; beautiful wood; tree produces juglone; on Diana Beresford Kroeger's top 10	x	x			4-9
6	tree	6-12'	buffaloberry (<i>Shepherdia</i> <i>canadensis</i>)*	edible fruit	x	x	x		2-6
7	tree large	75-100'	bur oak (<i>Quercus</i> <i>macrocarpa</i> or <i>Q. spp.</i>)*	edible acorns; must be leached to remove tannins; one of the most palatable oaks and with little tannin; on Diana Beresford Kroeger's top 10	x	x			3-8
8	tree large	50-75'	butternut (<i>Juglans</i> <i>cinerea</i>)*	edible nuts; species at risk	x				3-7
9	tree	20'	cherry sour (<i>Prunus</i> <i>cerasus</i>)*	edible fruit	x				3-7
10	tree	35-50'	chokecherry (<i>Prunus</i> <i>virginiana</i>)*	edible fruit	x	x			2
11	tree large	60'	heartnut (<i>Juglans</i> <i>ailanthifolia cordiformis</i>)*	edible nuts	x				4-8

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12	tree large	50-75'	honey locust (Gleditsia triacanthos)	Seed - raw or cooked; can be thorny or thornless; on Diana Beresford Kroeger's top 10	x	x	x		4-8
13	tree	40' std	mulberry (Morus alba)	edible fruit	x	x			4-9
14	tree/shrub	20-35'	nannyberry (Viburnum lentago)*	edible fruit, raw or cooked	x	x			2-8
15	tree	25-30'	pear Asian (Pyrus pyrifolia or bretschneideris)	edible fruit, good for winter storage (however, can be prone to fire blight)	x				5-9 or 4-8
16	tree	25-40' std; 8-15' dwarf	pear European (Pyrus communis)	edible fruit	x				4-9
17	tree	15-18'	plum Toka (Prunus salicina x americana, Japanese-American hybrid)	delicious edible fruit (ours fruited in 3 years)	x				3
18	tree/shrub	23'	Russian olive (Elaeagnus angustifolia)	edible fruit, leaves for tea; out-competes native vegetation in BC	x	x	x		2-7
19	tree large	70-85'	shagbark hickory (Carya ovata)*	edible nuts; tree produces juglone; on Diana Beresford Kroeger's top 10	x	x			4-8
20	shrub large	12-15'	apricot Manchurian (Prunus mandschurica)	edible fruit (we planted on two different years and they're having a hard time getting established)	x				3
21	shrub	5'	cherry Nanking (Prunus tomentosa)*	edible fruit	x				UK zone 2
22	shrub	15'	cherry-plum or chum (Prunus pumila besseyi x salicina)	edible fruit	x				3
23	shrub large	6-12'	cranberry high bush (Viburnum trilobum)	edible fruit for cooking	x	x			2-7

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24	shrub	3-5'	currant red and white (<i>Ribes rubrum</i> or <i>R. silvestre</i>)	edible fruit (these were our fastest shrub to establish and are our most abundant fruit)	x				4-8
25	shrub large	6-12'	elderberry (<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>)	edible flowers and fruit for cooking and medicine	x	x			3-10
26	shrub large	6-20'	false indigo (<i>Amorpha fruticosa</i>)	apparently fast-growing in our cold humid climate			x		4-8
27	shrub/trailing vine	8'	gojiberry (<i>Lycium barbarum</i>)	edible shoots, best in spring (however, other people have a hard time establishing it in the region; ours is in a warm sheltered microclimate and grow rampantly, so must be cut back twice a year or will take over; it took 3 or 4 years to start fruiting)	x	x			
28	shrub	4'	gooseberry (<i>Ribes uva-crispa</i>)	edible fruit	x				4-8 or 5-9?
29	shrub	6-9'	goumi (<i>Elaeagnus multiflora</i>)	edible fruit	x	x	x		5-9
30	vine woody	50'	grape river (<i>Vitis riparia</i>)	edible fruit	x				UK zone 2
31	shrub	5'	haskap or honeyberry (<i>Lonicera caerulea</i>)	edible fruit (use row-cover or net to protect fruit from birds)	x				1-6?
32	shrub large	12-20'	hazelbert (<i>Corylus americana</i> x <i>C. avellana</i>)	edible nuts; hybrid for larger nut and cold hardiness (we planted on two different years and they're having a hard time getting established)	x				3
33	shrub large	6-12'	hazelnut (<i>Corylus americana</i>)	edible nuts	x				4-8
34	vine woody	50'; 32'	kiwi hardy (<i>Actinidia arguta</i> ; <i>A. Kolomikta</i>)	edible fruit	x				4-8; 5-8
35	shrub	4'	New Jersey tea (<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>)	leaves for tea; roots and bark medicinal	x	x	x	x	4-9

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36	shrub	4-8'	raspberry (<i>Rubus idaeus</i>)	edible fruit (however, they'll spread, so are best for a simple polyculture; use row-cover or net to protect fruit from birds)	x	x			4-7
37	shrub large	19'	seaberry or sea buckthorn (<i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i>)	edible fruit (however, thorny and can spread easily)	x	x	x		3-7
38	shrub large/tree	13' (up to 33' dep on spp.)	serviceberry or Saskatoon berry or juneberry (<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i> ; <i>A. spp.</i>)	edible fruit*	x	x			4-6
39	shrub	8-20'	Siberian pea shrub (<i>Caragana arborens</i>)	(however, does not grow rapidly in our cold humid climate, so not ideal for annual for chop and drop)			x		2-7
40	herbaceous	3'	anise hyssop (<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>)	edible leaves for salads, tea; for pollinators; tolerates part-shade	x			x	7-10
41	herbaceous		arugula (<i>Eruca sativa</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun	x			x	
42	herbaceous		arugula perennial (<i>Diplotaxis tenuifolia</i>)	edible greens for salads (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)	x			x	5? 6?
43	herbaceous	5'	asparagus (<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>)	edible shoots (however, they'll take some space, so are best for a simple polyculture)	x				
44	herbaceous	2-4'	bee balm (<i>Monarda didyma</i>)	flowers and leaves for tea; for pollinators and hummingbirds (prefers part sun)	x	x		x	4-10
45	herbaceous		beetberry (<i>Chenopodium capitatum</i>)	reseeding annual; edible greens and small fruits for salads (however, reseeds like crazy)	x				

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46	herbaceous		borage (<i>Borago officinalis</i>)	reseeding annual; edible greens and flowers; for pollinators	x	x		x	6-9
47	herbaceous		calendula (<i>Calendula officinalis</i>)	reseeding annual; medicinal and edible flowers and leaves	x			x	UK zone 6
48	herbaceous		catnip or cat mint (<i>Nepeta cataria</i>)	edible leaves for teas (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)	x	x		x	3-7
49	herbaceous	8'; 9'	cattail (<i>Typha latifolia</i> ; <i>T. angustifolia</i>)	edible shoots, flowers, pollen and roots for cooking; best to harvest from clean sites with no concerns of water pollution (however, in very wet conditions, they spread more quickly than other plants)	x	x			
50	herbaceous		chives (<i>Allium schoenoprasum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects	x			x	5-11
51	herbaceous	4'	comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>)	chop and drop for potassium, compost activator; for medicine and pollinators (however, choose a good location, it's there to stay!)		x		x	3-9
52	herbaceous		croscnes or Chinese artichoke (<i>Stachys affinis</i>)	edible tuber (thrives in sandy soils)	x	x		x	4-8
53	herbaceous	3'+	daylily common or orange (<i>Hemerocallis fulva</i>)	edible shoots for salad or cooking, edible flowers and tubers; among first greens in spring (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)	x	x		?	3-10
54	herbaceous	2-4'	echinacea (<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>)	roots for medicine; beautiful flowers for pollinators (apparently leaves and flowers are edible)	x	x		x	3-10
55	herbaceous		feverfew (<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>)	for medicine and beneficial insects		x		x	5-8

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56	herbaceous		garlic chives (<i>Allium tuberosum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects	x	x		x	4-8
57	herbaceous	6'	gobo or cultivated burdock (<i>Arctium lapa</i>)	edible roots	x	x		x	3-7
58	herbaceous		good King Henry (<i>Chenopodium bonus-henricus</i>)	edible leaves (more palatable when cooked)	x	x			4-8
59	herbaceous ground cover		ground ivy (<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>)	spreads quickly, easy to remove; leaves for medicine (among first flowers in spring for pollinators)	x			x	
60	herbaceous vine		groundnut (<i>Apios americana</i>)	edible tubers for cooking; (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)	x	x	x	x	3-7
61	herbaceous		horseradish (<i>Armoracia rusticana</i>)	edible roots	x	x		x	4-9
62	herbaceous		hosta (<i>Funkia</i> spp.)	edible leaves cooked (<i>H. montana</i> and <i>H. sieboldii</i> are most popular for eating; very shade-tolerant)	x				<i>H. montana</i> and <i>H. sieboldii</i> 4-8
63	herbaceous		kale red Russian (<i>Brassica oleracea</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun	x			x	6-9?
64	herbaceous		kale Siberian (<i>Brassica napus</i>)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun	x			x	6-9?
65	herbaceous	3-5'	Korean celery (<i>Dystaenia takesimana</i>)	edible leaves; flowers for pollinators	x	x		x	4?
66	herbaceous		lavender (<i>Lavendula angustifolia</i>)	medicinal and edible flowers and leaves; beautiful flowers for pollinators	x			x	5-8

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67	herbaceous		leek perennial (<i>Allium ampeloprasum</i>)	edible leaves and bulbs; used like garlic for medicine	x	x		x	5-9
68	herbaceous		leek wild or ramps (<i>Allium tricoccum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects	x			x	5-9
69	herbaceous		lemon balm (<i>Melissa officinalis</i>)	for tea and pollinators (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)	x	x		x	4-8
70	herbaceous	6'	lovage (<i>Levisticum officinale</i>)	edible leaves and stems	x			x	5-9
71	herbaceous		lupin perennial (<i>Lupinus perennis</i>)	grows back quickly, so good for chop and drop; beautiful flowers for pollinators; not edible (spreads easily by seed)			x	x	4-8
72	herbaceous	almost 3'	mallow musk (<i>Malva moschata</i>)	edible leaves and flowers; leaves and flowers for medicine	x	x			3-10
73	herbaceous	4'+	marshmallow (<i>Althaea officinalis</i>)	flowers, leaves and roots for medicine; edible leaves; for pollinators	x	x		?	3-7
74	herbaceous		mint (<i>Mentha</i> spp.)	for tea and pollinators; makes a reasonable ground-cover (however, spreads easily in moderate conditions)	x	x		x	
75	herbaceous	3'	mint mountain (<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>)	edible leaves; a favourite for diverse pollinators (does not spread like <i>mentha</i> spp.)	x			x	4-8
76	herbaceous		onion Egyptian walking (<i>Allium cepa proliferum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects	x	x		x	4-8
77	herbaceous		onion perennial or Welsh (<i>Allium fistulosum</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking, among first greens in spring; for beneficial insects	x			x	6-9?

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78	herbaceous		oregano (<i>Origanum vulgare</i>)	edible leaves for salads and cooking; leaves for medicine	x	x		x	4-10
79	herbaceous		sea kale (<i>Crambe maritima</i>)	edible broccoli-like flowers (seems to prefer full sun)	x			x	4-8
80	herbaceous		sedum or orpine (<i>Sedum telephium</i> or <i>S. spectabile</i>)	edible leaves (tolerates shade)	x	x		?	4-8 or 5-9?
81	herbaceous		silverweed (<i>Potentilla anserina</i>)	edible leaves and roots (however, spreads quickly by runners)	x	x		?	4-8
82	herbaceous	3'	skirret (<i>Sium sisarum</i>)	edible tuber; flowers for pollinators	x			x	4-9
83	herbaceous	3'	Solomon's seal (<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>)	edible shoots for cooking (tolerates shade)	x	x			3-7
84	herbaceous	3'	St. John's wort (<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>)	leaves and flowers for medicine; for pollinators (short-lived plant)	x	x		x	3-7
85	herbaceous	3'	stinging nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>)	edible greens for cooking and tea, dries well for winter storage (however, choose a good location – it stings!)	x			x	
86	herbaceous		strawberry cultivated "Albion" (<i>Fragaria x ananassa</i>)	edible fruit, ground cover (covers the ground less quickly than wood strawberry; everbearing, prefers moderate conditions)	x			?	4-8
87	herbaceous ground cover		strawberry wood or wild or alpine (<i>Fragaria vesca</i>)	edible fruit (survives in drier and wetter conditions, thrives and fruits better in moderate conditions)	x	x		?	4-8?
88	herbaceous large	7'	sunchoke or Jerusalem artichoke (<i>Helianthus tuberosus</i>)	edible roots, best harvested in fall or spring (however, they'll take some space, so are best for a simple polyculture)	x	x		x	4-8
89	herbaceous large	7-8'	sunflower Maximilian (<i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>)	edible shoots; for pollinators; apparently good deer screen	x			x	5-10

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90	herbaceous	3'	sweet cicely (Myrrhis odorata)	leaves for cooking and tea; for pollinators	x	x		x	4-8
91	herbaceous		thyme (Thymus vulgaris)	edible leaves for salads and cooking; leaves for medicine	x	x		x	5-8
92	herbaceous		turnip purple top white globe (Brassica rapa)	hardy reseeding annual; broadcast seeds grow well on wood chips in part sun	x			x	7-11
93	herbaceous	5'	valerian (Valeriana officinalis)	medicinal roots, flowers for pollinators (however, spreads easily and far by seed)				x	4-8
94	herbaceous ground cover		white clover (Trifolium repens)	(however, it can grow more quickly and cover other plants in herbaceous layer, so chop and drop it!)	x	x	x	x	4-8
95	herbaceous vine		yam cinnamon (Dioscorea batatas or opposita)	edible tuber and aerial tuber for cooking (slow to appear in spring; possibly sensitive to extreme cold temperatures, below -25C, so mulch well in fall)	x	x			4-8

References:

- Edible Forest Gardens, by Dave Jacke & Eric Toensmeier
- pfaf.org
- Tree List for the City of Ottawa, by Diana Beresford Kroeger (as replacements for ash)