

Japanese Zelkova (*Zelkova serrata*)



Japanese Zelkova trees are handsome trees in the Elm family, that were originally thought to be a possible replacement for the American elm tree which were lost due to Dutch elm disease back in the 1950's and 1960's. They are resistant to not only Dutch elm disease, but also elm leaf beetles and Japanese beetles. They should be planted in full sun are very tolerant of a wide variety of soil conditions and are particularly drought tolerant once established, thus making them great tough urban trees. They are often planted as street trees in cities. They are also suitable for planting in residential yards and residential streets, parks, and other large areas.

Zelkovas have an interesting vase-shaped growth habit and typically will grow 50-80' in height. They have dark green leaves in the summer and typically have a yellow-orange-brownish fall color. They also have an attractive bark and when mature will develop an exfoliating bark not unlike Chinese elms.

There are two particular cultivars or varieties of Japanese Zelkovas that should be readily available in our area. The 'Green Vase' Japanese Zelkova is a highly recommended cultivar that is a very vigorous, fast-grower with the vase-shaped upright arching branches. This one grows 60-70' and gets 40-50' wide.

There is a narrower form of Japanese Zelkova called 'Mushashino' that has a narrower columnar vase-shaped growth habit that is better suited than 'Green Vase' to tighter more restricted areas. It grows to a height of 45' and only gets about 15' wide. The 'Mushashino' Japanese Zelkova also has a yellow fall color.

