

# Material for Clump, Group, and Forest Plantings

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**Foliage Size and Shape** – Since the goal of these styles is generally to give the impression of a trees that are further away than a single tree it is even more critical to get trees with small foliage. In addition, it can be more difficult to reduce the leaf size because you must also balance the vigor of multiple trees. Finally, since the trees are normally supposed to be related trees are normally selected that have similar foliage.

**Clump, Group, and Forest** – A clump is composed of multiple trunks that all come from the same base – this can be done by letting small trees grow together or layering below a set of branches. The difference between a group planting and a forest is that you can easily count the number of trees in a group while it becomes more difficult to count them in a forest.

**Tree Species** – All of the trees in a clump should be the same species and should have extremely similar foliage since they are growing from the same base. Most group and forest plantings are done with a single species since this makes it easier to care for them. However, it is not uncommon to plant multiple species together in a forest to give a more diverse feel. However, selecting species with similar cultural requirements will make it easier to care for. Suggested species include:

**Maples** (Acer) – Japanese (A. palmatum), Trident (A. buergerianum), Amur (A. ginnela)

**Larch** (Larix) – Japanese (L. kaempferi), European (L. decidua)

**Elm** (Ulmus) – Chinese (U. parviflora) [multiple cultivars], Siberian (U. pumila)

**Hornbeam** (Carpinus) – Korean (C. coreana), Japanese (C. japonica), Looseflower (C. laxiflora),

**Juniper** (Juniperus) – Shimpaku (J. chinensis), Dwarf Japanese (J. procumbens)

**Dawn Redwood** (Metasequoia glyptostroboides)

**Pine** (Pinus) – Scots (P. sylvestris), Mugho (P. mugho), Japanese White (P. parviflora)

**Ficus** (Ficus) – Any of the small leaved varieties

**Trunk Sizes** – Natural clumps, groups, and forests have a range of trunk sizes since some of the trees grow larger as they receive more resources. Ideally we assemble bonsai with a range of trunk sizes, but it can take several years to accumulate such material. As a result it is fairly common to assemble using similar sized material and then allow some of the trees to grow more freely and whence larger.

**Number for Trees** – Odd numbers of trees are normally used until there are more trees than can easily be counted quickly – generally somewhere in the mid-teens. Four trees or groups of trees are normally avoided as well because the number four and the death have very similar pronunciation in several Asian languages. It is always a good idea to have more trees available than you plan to use since some of them may not be suitable once you start planting. I suggesting having about 50% extra when you start to plant, or 100% extra when you order small stock, or about 5X as many if you start from seed or cuttings to allow for lack of germination and cutting strike.

## Sources:

**Liners, Plugs, and Bare Root** – One of the easiest sources is to order small seedlings or cuttings from commercial nurseries. Liners (2 – 4” pots) and plugs can be planted into a group immediately while bare root stock is often better if it is grown in a pot for a year or two. A couple of suggestions are:

- Evergreen GardenWorks - <http://www.evergreengardenworks.com/> - Large selection of 2” to gallon sized pots. Brent is knowledgeable and focuses on bonsai.
- Heritage Seedlings – <http://www.heritageseedlings.com/index.htm> - Wholesale seedling supplier that will waive their \$500 min for the IEBS (still need to order at least \$250 and meet quantity minimums).
- Spokane County Conservation District - <http://www.sccd.org/treesale/index.shtml> Mostly native bareroot species at good prices, typically in groups of 10.

**Seeds** – Seeds can be one of the cheapest routes, particularly if you collect your own, but it can take several years to develop stock that is suitable for planting. In addition, many common seed sources are highly variable so you will need to start with far more than you need for the planting.

- Collect your own – find a tree with desirable traits and ask the owner if you can collect seed.
- Sheffield’s Seed Company - [http://sheffields.com/seed\\_category/](http://sheffields.com/seed_category/) - Broad selection and good prices.

**Cuttings and Air layers** – These methods insure that the foliage of all of the plants is identical. They are also the lowest costs since they are from a tree you already have. Cuttings generally take 1 – 2 years before they can be planted as a group. Several air layers can be done on the same tree to obtain all of the material needed for the planting.