

BELL COUNTY MASTER GARDENER

Tip of the Week

By Ursula Nanna

Choosing the Right Shade Trees

Add comfort and value to property with a few well-placed trees. Trees shade the house or outdoor living areas with Southern and Western shade being most important. Trees will range from 12 to 120 feet. Choose the correct height for the right place to begin so when it is mature you won't "top off", or drastically delimb a tree, open it to infection and stress, shorten the tree's life span, and make it "really ugly."

Trees are classified as deciduous (loosing leaves in the fall) or evergreen (usually keeping their leaves). So look at classification, shape, size, color, growth, tree life, and other categories when choosing the right tree.

Native and adapted trees are disease and insect resistant plus heat and drought tolerant. Short height native and adapted trees range from 12 to 25 feet high; medium height grow from 40-60 feet tall; large grow from 80-120 feet tall.

When first landscaping, plant trees first as they take longer to grow and establish. Fall to very early spring are the best times to plant which gives the trees months of good root growth before the arrival of the Texas summer. You must water even in the winter to help the roots grow.

To plant, dig the hole 2-3 times the diameter of the root ball and only as deep as the tree was in the pot. Place the tree in the hole, backfill, and firm the soil around the tree leaving a small moat around the tree for a water channel. Water to remove air bubbles and then water about 3 times a week gradually backing off to once a week. Never let a new tree completely dry out until established, about 3 years.

When choosing a tree, consider the growth rate of a tree. Choose the largest you can afford and you will have instant results. But plan to be patient. A fast growing shade tree is usually more short-lived than a steady grower, sometimes by 30-50 years. Why plant and care for a tree and in 15 years have to cut it down and begin over again? Don't over plant and crowd your trees either. Always consider **growth** size, both up and out!

Bell County Master Gardeners Association is a 501c3 nonprofit group in partnership with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Bell County.

For questions and for a list of native trees contact: ask.bcmga@gmail.com