

TREES FOR TEXAS PLANTING YOUR TREES

Second in a series of three articles describing the planting and aftercare of trees in the home landscape

Successful planting of trees in your home landscape depends on several factors such as correct handling of nursery stock, condition of tree, site preparation, time of planting and after planting care.

The best time to plant landscape trees is during the months of September through December. The roots grow anytime the soil temperature is 40 degrees or higher, which may occur all winter in Texas. During the winter months, the root systems of the fall-planted specimens develop and become established. Bare root plants, however, including roses, pecan, and fruit trees should be planted in late winter when they are completely dormant.

Think about the plant's needs before you invest. Is it adapted to your area? Will it grow in sun or shade? Does it need a wet or dry location? Is it cold hardy? The tag on the plant is a good guide.

Plant properly for success.

1. Dig a hole large enough in diameter. If the hole is twice as wide in diameter, as and no deeper than the root ball, the size is adequate. Research has shown that the wider the hole is, the better the plant will grow. Trees should be planted at least the same depth as they were grown in the nursery.
2. Handle the plant by the root ball, not by the trunk. Always remove any container before you plant. Burlap may be left on the ball but all plastic, metal, and strings should be removed to prevent girdling.
3. Fill the planting hole with water. Add soil. This removes air from roots and ensures viability. Keep adding water and soil until the tree is planted. Backfill the hole, using only the native soil removed from the hole; do not use soil amendments when planting large shrubs and trees. Fill the hole, and firm the soil around the plant. Construct a ring of backfill 2 to 3 inches high at the outer edge of the diameter of the hole to form a water basin. Water thoroughly to settle the soil around the roots and to eliminate any air pockets.
4. Do not fertilize your tree or shrub after planting. Wait until early in the spring. Heavy applications of fertilizer may burn and injure the root system, and could possibly kill the plant.
5. Watering has been and remains paramount in transplanting. At the time of transplanting, soak the root ball and surrounding soil. A thorough watering every 7 to 10 days dramatically increases success. More frequent watering may encourage root rot. Remember more trees and shrubs fail from over watering than from under watering, but the roots must not be allowed to dry out while establishing itself in the landscape.
6. Before calling it a day, add 4 to 6 inches of mulch around the base of newly planted trees and shrubs. This helps to keep down weeds and conserve soil moisture. Use pine bark, compost, grass clippings, or leaves.

Adding trees to your landscape will provide something nice for now and the near future. They will also be something lasting and beautiful for posterity. Trees moderate the climate. They purify the air. They can reduce smog, noise, and air pollution. They provide food and shelter for birds and other animals. When properly planted trees will give many years of low maintenance pleasure and enhance the value of your home.