

Selecting and Planting Trees

Trees are hard workers. They reduce air, water and noise pollution. They add to the value of our homes, conserve energy, reduce water runoff and protect us from harmful UV radiation. Trees work hard for little pay. Why not plant a hard-working tree! Fall planting is best by far, but early spring planting is okay. Plant them before the weather gets hot and dry.

The most important part of a tree is underground. Plan to pamper and protect the roots. If you fail to do this, you may get a lazy, sick tree instead of a diligent laborer. Poorly planted trees are a headache and often their problems cannot be fully corrected. Plan before you plant.

Carefully select your tree. Many fast-growing trees are also fast dying. Buy trees locally, from reputable firms. Trees from Michigan and other far off places will do well in Michigan - not Georgia. Get a copy of our brochure, Fast Growing Trees. Use this information to select a tree that is adapted to our area. Select one that has few problems and will not get too big for your site. Do not plant trees too close to power lines, other trees, houses etc.

Tenderly care for the tree before you plant it. Keep the root ball moist but not wet. Carry the tree by the root ball, never the trunk. Store the tree in a cool place and do not nick the trunk. Dig an extremely wide planting hole. It should be at least two to five times as wide as the root ball. It is best to dig up a large bed and plant the tree in the center of it. The more soft soil you supply, the quicker the plant can take root. Slope the sides of the hole.

Do you know where the underground utilities are? Find out before you dig by calling (800) 282-7411. You could hurt yourself or others by digging into utilities!

Plant the tree no deeper than it originally grew. Plant potted trees with the top of the root ball at the soil surface. On bare root trees, look for the enlarged root collar to know how deep they were growing. Plant them at this level - no deeper. You can sometimes see a color difference on the bark of some trees where the soil originally was.

Cut off broken roots and spread the rest of the roots out carefully. Alternate adding soil and water as you carefully refill the hole. Make sure roots are spread out as they originally grew. Refill the hole with soil - do not add organic matter or fertilizer. These are not necessary and may harm the plant. Do not over pack the soil. Use water to wash soil around roots and to settle the plant. Put a three-inch mulch around the tree out to at least the drip line. Once again, the larger this area is - the better.

Water is the key to tree survival. Water it well at planting and again two to three days later. Check the soil around the tree once or twice a week by digging slightly into the soil with your fingers. Keep the soil moist but not wet. Let the soil dry slightly between waterings. Stake the tree only if it will not stand up. Use a loosely fitting tie that allows the tree to sway some and that will not cut into the bark. Give the tree special care for a year until it is well established.