

Tree *moving*

How much and how big?

This month, **James de Havilland** offers advice on how best to move trees

**Simple question:
What is the largest size of tree that can be moved and transplanted and how much will it cost to do the job?**

Although there will always be a degree of debate, the answer will typically depend upon a range of factors, not least being the likelihood that the moved tree will survive. So where do you start?

There will always be occasions when a tree or trees will be growing in a position where they are 'in the way'. Similarly, modern impatience will often want a tree to be established in a particular spot, with the expectation that the new arrival looks like a pretty mature tree from day one; a stand of freshly planted whips may well develop into small saplings in under ten years, but that sometimes is just not fast enough.

On golf courses, it is now common practice to move small saplings growing on one part of the course

to another. This can be to remove them to allow remodelling of an approach, tee or green. It is also handy to be able to add or replace a tree without having to wait for it to grow.

Although moving small trees with a specialist tree spade is not difficult, it follows that the job should be carried out by someone who knows what they are doing; a potential problem is attempting to transplant a tree that is too large for the tree spade used to move it. Transplanted trees will also need looking after, secure staking also proving essential.

That said, transplanting smaller trees and shrubs with a modest tree spade should be well within the abilities of course staff. A diminutive skidsteer loader mounted tree spade can be hired in for perhaps as little as £250 a week.

These smaller units can move trees with a girth of up to around

200mm, the rootball diameter approaching 850mm at its widest point.

In practice, the size of tree that can be moved this way will be typically smaller than most would imagine. The key is to ensure the tree rootball is large enough to support the tree. Although this is pretty obvious, it is all too easy to underestimate just how large the rootball should be to ensure a successful transplant.

When it comes to moving larger trees, it is again possible to move these successfully as long as the job is carried out at the right time. October through to March is the best time for deciduous trees, but extreme cold and wet weather should be avoided, especially for Evergreen species, which are best moved early or late in the season.

Evergreens move well even in April when the warmer grounds allows them to re-establish before wind dries them out.

TOP RIGHT:
A good specimen tree can be easily extracted from a location where it is less likely to be appreciated. Note how the roots are not all removed by the tree spade. A transplanted tree will take a while to adjust to its new home, and must be securely staked.

BELOW TOP RIGHT:
A large tree spade makes moving trees and shrubs much easier, a large rootball being one of the keys to a successful transplant. The pictured unit is used by The Belfry.

ABOVE BOTTOM RIGHT:
Tree movement specialists have the ability to move existing trees both locally and further afield. The picture shows a 1.1m tree spade lifting a 350mm girth beech.

BOTTOM RIGHT:
The tree spade will drop the tree to be transplanted into a hole that it has first been used to open up. The waste soil will typically be returned to the hole vacated by the moved tree.

With thanks to tree moving specialist, Alastair Beddall, Practicality Brown Ltd
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Larger trees may also benefit from having the roots 'cut' a season prior to them being lifted. It is too easy to generalise on this subject, the best advice remaining to talk to a tree specialist.

Calling in a professional to do the job will not be cheap. As a guide, calling in a pro using a 1100mm diameter spade will cost upwards of £750; up to 15 trees may be moved a day, but a lot will depend upon distances between moves and the terrain. Staking and feeding costs at around £50 per tree should also be considered. The larger the tree, the more it will cost to move. As a very broad guide, allow £170 to move a tree of up to 350mm based on 15 trees moved in a good day. Trees above 1000mm in diameter can be moved, but expect costs to start at £2000 per tree.

Generally, rootball size and watering are the cause of any transplant failures.

The British Standard guide is that the rootball size should be 10x that of stem Diameter. This is an excellent rule of thumb although some species and soil types will adjust this either way.

To complicate matters, stem size is measured in Inches Diameter in the USA and in Centimetre Girth in Europe.

It is always better to have too large a rootball than the other way around. In most cases, the trunk girth is typically measured about a metre from ground level.

Also consider tree height. Although there are no published guidelines, it follows that a relatively fast growing and slender species, such as Black Poplar (*Populus nigra*) will perhaps demand a larger rootball than an English Oak (*Quercus Robur*) of similar transplant girth. The larger the tree, the more important it becomes to seek professional advice.