

## PLANNING AND KEEPING A SMALL NURSERY

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There are several important points to consider when planning a small nursery for a golf course, park or recreation area.

It is most important to consider the purpose of having the nursery area in your over-all plan of operation. Nursery stock is available in quantity and variety today so this is usually not the problem. However, the problem can be having the material available when planting crews are ready to do their work. Many operators prefer to have plant materials on hand to make replacements for those that died.

In newly established or expanding operations it is often desirable to have a small nursery in order to have a supply of shade trees and evergreens available for use. The above are important reasons for having a "holding" or "finishing" nursery on a recreational or non-commercial operation.

It is important to point out that costs involved in producing landscape sized plant materials in small quantities is an expensive proposition. The quality of the plant material produced in many of these operations is not up to that which can be purchased. Commercial nurserymen are familiar with the special requirements necessary to produce the plants growing in their nursery. For this reason it is recommended that production costs and quality of plant material be considered before starting a "production" nursery.

It is possible, however, to purchase large liners or small sized planting stock for "growing-on" to a more desirable landscape size. This essentially is a "holding" or "finishing" nursery which can be a valuable asset. A nursery of this scope should be designed to provide plant material for expansion of facilities, replacements or for re-landscaping existing areas.

Land for use as a small nursery should be in good tilth, relatively high in organic matter and well drained. Attention should be given to weed populations on the land. If the area is infested with quackgrass, Canada thistle or bindweed, these should be eradicated before planting.

An ample supply of water is important for best growth of ornamental plants. The nursery should be incorporated into the irrigation program of a park or golf course. The water is especially necessary at planting time and for maximum growth during periods of extended drought.

The lay-out of the nursery is important for fast and efficient upkeep of the area. Blocks of one basic kind of plants (eg. evergreens, deciduous trees, etc.) should be incorporated in one area. The cultural reasons for this are as follows: spacing of the plants, cultivation, herbicide application, insecticide application and digging operations.

Proper spacing of plant material cannot be stressed enough. The distance between the rows and between the plants in the rows is governed mainly by the desired size of the plants at harvest. The kind and size of equipment available for cultivating and spraying also has a bearing on the spacing. There should be plenty of room for the equipment to move in the rows so the operator will not damage the plants. The best recommendation to be given would be to over-space in a small nursery so that the men have plenty of room to operate their equipment.

Selection of material to be grown will certainly depend on the landscape or long-range plan developed for the area. Several varieties of shade trees, flowering trees and evergreens should probably be considered for the area. Be sure to know all of the pests associated with the plant material grown. If insects and diseases are known to be a problem on specific varieties avoid planting them or take the necessary measures to prevent damaging infestations. Prevention of infestations of insects and diseases will be necessary for success of the operation.

Weed control is one of the most pressing problems in the nursery industry today. We cannot as yet recommend any herbicide to effectively control weeds in all types of ornamentals (trees, deciduous shrubs and narrowleaf evergreens). Most narrowleaf evergreens are tolerant to low rates of application of simazine. Deciduous shrubs are less tolerant than evergreens to most of the herbicides on the market today.

Since applications of the materials available today are limited to special crops (we recommend that cultivation and hoeing be the main methods of weed control in a small nursery).

In summary, keep these points in mind when planning a small nursery.

1. Select large liners for "finishing" in the nursery.
2. Be sure to plant the material on well drained land.
3. Additional organic matter should be added to the soil by manuring or growing green manure or sod crops.
4. Have irrigation available for use at planting times and during dry spells.
5. Do not crowd the plants in the rows and allow space between the rows for ease of cultivation.
6. Plant only for your needs in the immediate future. Overgrown plants are expensive to maintain and expensive to move.
7. Remove blocks of plants at one time so you can keep a rotation in progress.
8. When the time comes to cease the nursery operation do not hesitate to do so. Planting without a plan can do more harm than good.

### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS TURFGRASS CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS DECEMBER 7 - 8, 1968

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