

SUCCESS WITH TREES AND SHRUBS LIES IN PROPER PLANTING

Planting is one of the most important procedures determining the success or failure of ornamental plants. According to James A. Fizzell, University of Illinois Extension Adviser, Horticulture, in Cook County, attention must be given to this practice if you expect plants to respond well. Watering, pruning, fertilizing, and buying good plants seldom make up for poor planting, he says.

Container-grown plants and balled and burlapped (B & B) plants can be planted anytime. Bare root plants should be planted in early spring or fall when they are dormant.

Poor drainage accounts for more losses in planting than any other factor. In very poorly drained locations, installation of drainage tiles may be the only way to get plants to grow. Where groups of plants are planted, you may want to consider building raised beds or planting on hills or berms. This helps overcome poorly drained sites by creating a well-drained medium on top of the ground.

The hole for container or B & B plants should be the same depth as the plant set in the nursery and at least 6" wider on all sides of the soil ball. The soil on the bottom of the hole should be tamped firm to prevent excess settling and the formation of air pockets under the root ball. High planting is suggested in areas where soils are heavy and drainage is poor.

After placing the plant in the hole, cut all strings and push the burlap down into the hole. If strings are not cut, they can girdle the plant; and burlap sticking above the soil acts as a wick, drying the soil ball. Plants growing in containers should be removed no matter what the container. If roots are growing in a circle, once the plant is removed, take a knife and cut down the sides. This will prevent the roots from continuing their growth, causing girdling and poor rooting.

Fizzell recommends backfilling the hole with the same soil removed from it. Modifying the soil with peatmoss or compost as is often recommended creates a situation in which the water runs into the loose soil more readily than it can seep out through the surrounding soil. In such a situation, the plant will drown.

When back filling, fill the hole halfway with soil and apply water until you get a slurry. Fill the hole the rest of the way up and again make a slurry. This helps to get soil all the way around the ball and eliminates air pockets. When you finish backfilling, leave a depression for later watering.

The limited root system of the plant may make supplemental watering necessary, during extended dry weather. Be careful not to keep the soil continually soaked.

Leave the area over the root ball free of sod and cover the soil with a mulch, such as wood chips. A ¾ inch layer of mulch will help to conserve moisture, reduce weed growth, maintain uniform soil temperatures, and prevent crusting.

Support newly planted trees by staking. Wrapping the trunk of thin bark trees, such as Norway Maple, will reduce winter injury from frost cracking.

Mr. James A. Fizzell
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WE'VE HEARD IT SAID... On close examination you will find that the person with a green thumb also has a calloused palm.

TOO HILARIOUS NOT TO SHARE

Taken from "AIDE", the USAA Insurance Company publication, what follows are actual quotes from accident reports submitted to various insurance companies by hapless policy holders:

"Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have."

"The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions."

"I collided with a stationary truck coming the other way."

"The guy was all over the road; I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him."

"I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment."

"To avoid hitting the bumper of the car in front, I struck the pedestrian."

"My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle."

"I told the police I was not injured, but on removing my hat, I found I had a fractured skull."

"I was sure the old fellow would never make it to the other side of the road when I struck him."

"The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth."

"I was thrown from my car as it left the road. I was later found in a ditch by some stray cows."

"The telephone pole was approaching. I was attempting to swerve out of its way, when it struck my front end."

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