

Tree pruning: The kindest cut

Continued from page 15

and appearance of trees and prolongs their life by removing dead, weakened, diseased or insect-infested branches.

Arborists place pruning cuts outside the branch collar, the swollen area where the branch attaches to the main trunk. You can easily see the branch collar on many trees. "The whole idea behind proper pruning is to avoid injuring the trunk," Rathjens explained. "Once the trunk is damaged, it can lead to decay and death of the tree."

A common pruning mistake is making one straight cut through a branch. When cut this way, the branch's weight can cause the wood to splinter and pull bark from the tree. To avoid tearing, a cut should be made on the branch's underside, a foot or two out from the trunk, about one-third of the way through the branch.

A second cut should be made on top of the limb a few inches farther out from the first cut. These two cuts remove most of the branch's weight. The stub is removed with a final cut made just outside the branch bark ridge and through the collar.

Another frequent error is painting a cut. In most cases, painting is not recommended because the paint traps moisture on the freshly cut surface, which provides an environment conducive to fungal growth. Painting should only be done in rare instances, such as on trees that are susceptible to oak wilt and Dutch elm disease during periods of beetle flight.

SCHEDULING PLANTING

Although properly prepared and protected planting stock can often be successfully transplanted during any season, there are specific times of the year when planting is most successful. Winter is a good time to determine which trees you want to plant. Planting at the correct time encourages the growth of healthy trees.

In general, plants are best moved when shoots are not actively growing — the resting or dormant stage. Deciduous trees are normally planted in the fall after leaf drop and before the soil freezes or in early spring before bud break.

Narrowleaf evergreen also may be planted in the fall or in the spring before new growth starts. Broadleaf evergreens should be planted in the spring in climatic zones where soils freeze. In northern regions where the soil freezes early and deep spring planting of evergreens is perhaps the safest, says Len Burkhart, Ph.D., a horticulturist with Davey.

"In the South with its mild winters, fall planting is preferred," Burkhart said. "Winter planting is fine for plants with a root ball large enough to contain undisturbed roots that supply branches with water until spring."

Transplant success often depends on soil temperatures. The soil must be warm enough to permit the growth of new roots immediately after planting and continue until adequate root growth can support the plant's water-absorbing potential. "Roots grow best when soil temperatures are between 40 and 90 degrees F," Burkhart says. "Trees should be transplanted at least four weeks before soil temperatures drop below 40 degrees F to allow proper root development in the fall."

Heart of America elects Eldridge president

Superintendent Jeff Eldridge of the Deer Creek GC in Overland Park, Kan., was elected president of the Heart of America Golf Course Superintendents Association (HAGCSA) at its annual meeting in November at Loch Lloyd CC. Eldridge succeeds outgoing president Chuck Haby of St. Joseph CC.

Bill Bologna of Swope Memorial GC in Kansas City, Mo., was elected vice president and Gary Higbie of Trails West GC in Leavenworth, Kan., was elected secretary/treasurer. Dave Dettmer of Lawrence CC in Lawrence, Kan., Woody Moriarty of Hillcrest CC in Kansas City, Mo., and Jim Naudet of Leawood South CC in Leawood, Kan., were

all elected to two-year terms on the HAGCSA's Board of Directors.

Jon Kindlesparger of Alvarado CC and Tyler Koch of Hodge Park Golf Course both have one year remaining on their terms as directors. One other person will be appointed by the president to fill the one year remaining on Bologna's term as director.

The HAGCSA also passed a by-law change that the nominating committee for the Board of Directors shall now consist of three past presidents of the association with the immediate past president serving as chairperson as appointed by the president with board approval.

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