Fall Planting and Transplanting of Trees

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Fall planting can extend the work season and offer the grounds manager the opportunity to improve the landscape during the time of reduced work loads. There are some basic rules of good plant care that must be observed before any planting program can be successful.

First, provide a soil media suitable for good plant growth, devoid of rubble and road salts, yet capable of anchoring the tree firmly.

Second, provide adequate water to encourage root growth during the fall, before winter freeze up. Watering should also aid in the setting of the soil and reduce the chance of large air pockets, which tend to dry out the roots, creating a barrier to the movement of soil moisture by capillary action. Overwatering or excessive repeated watering can lead to drowning, the suffocation of the roots by water completely filing the open porous spaces between the soil particles. The loss of soil oxygen is as much a detriment as the lack of water.

Third, choose species best suited to the landscape site most able to survive fall planting. These include Norway and sugar maples, sycamores, red and pin oaks, lindens, ginko (maiden hair), horsechestnuts and almost all of the conifers. Avoid exposure to open, severely windy sites. These are best left to a spring-time planting.

Root systems with a thick fleshy covering as a rule, are best planted in the spring. Example of these are dogwoods, tulip trees, magnolia, yellowood, sweetgum, beech, birch and tupelo.

Fourth, nursery grown trees that have been root pruned the year before and have had the crown properly shaped offer the best hope of survival. Selecting forest grown trees requires an exceptionally large root ball, disproportionate with the crown in order to assure sufficient roots to support the top. Larger equipment is then required to complete the move, making it more expensive plus making it a riskier process.

Fifth, staking the tree securely is often overlooked or omitted. It is necessary to stop or reduce movement of the crown which flexes the tree, creating a cavity around the base of the tree at the soil line. Water can then collect in the cavity, freeze, and destroy the bark, thus interrupting the cambium flow at the soil line, resulting in death of the plant. Mechanical damage is also caused to the root system as the crown flexes, resulting in slower establishment, or may cause the tree to tip and expose the roots. Staking systems can vary but success is best accomplished when two or three hardwood stakes are utilized. Stakes are placed on more than one side and aligned to protect the tree from the force of the prevailing wind. Wires should never completely circle the trunk and should always be covered with a length of old garden hose, thus preventing any injury to the trunk of the tree. The larger trees need the added support of the three wire system placed equally about the trunk, fastened at least halfway up the main stem and far enough at the base to be beyond the rootball. A 45 degree angle for the supporting wires is best.

Sixth, enough cannot be said for the practice of mulching fall planted tree. Mulching aids in preserving the soil temperatures, giving a longer period of time for roots to establish themselves before winter freeze up. Moisture is retained and weeds are reduced during the followng growing season, thus improving the appearance of the planting.

Seventh, wrapping the trunk with burlap or a special paper tree wrap protects the trunk from damage through freezing and thawing. This damage is characterized by vertical splits and or a loosening of the bark from the trunk. During periods of wet, rainy weather the practice of wrapping can be delayed, or substituted by a burlap screen placed a short distance from the tree. Under no circumstances should the first wrappiing be left on indefinitely, but should also be removed within the first year. Failure to remove it can cause girding as the trunk continues to expand.

Eighth, little or no fertilizer need be added if the soil used to backfil has resonable nutrient levels as determined by a previous soil sample. Small amounts of phosphorus and potash can be added (¼ cup per bushel of soil) if desired. Never place the fertilizer in the hole so that it can come in direct contact with the exposed roots. Nitrogen based fertilizers need not be used as they promote top growth. New growth in the crown is to be avoided.

Ninth, The success of failure of all plantings often can be attributed to the planting depth. Although some species may survive for short times with minor grade changes. NEVER change the depth at planting time. The rule here is "plant at the same depth to which it has been growing".

Care should be used when transplanting to firmly tamp the soil so that no large air pockets persist around or under the soil ball. These same pockets can exist when using the pointed tree spades to excavate the planting hole.

Chemical for his "acquisition" of Dr. Robert Shearman of the University of Nebraska. Dr. Shearman's sand topdressing update proved we don't have all the answers yet! Some of you might be interested in the results of the championship. Here they are:

1ST LOW GROSS-SUPERINTENDENT: Randy Nelson, 74; 2ND LOW GROSS SUPERINTENDENT: (Tie) Monte Swift, 75 and Jerry Dalen, 75; 1ST LOW NET-SUPERINTENDENT: (Tie) Joe Morris, 67 and Dean Pelkey, 67; 3RD LOW NET-SUPERINTENDENT: Jim Gardner, 70. LOW GROSS-SR. SUPERINTENDENT: Jerry McCann, 86; LOW NET-SR. SUPERINTENDENT: Tony Magina, 77; LOW GROSS-ASSOCIATE: Mike Redmond, 90 ("Ninety"); HIGH BOWLERS SCORE: Steve Lawson, 125.

These scores seem awfully good on such an unforgiving course. All winners will be graciously recognized at the September meeting.

Speaking of the September meeting, we're heading back to Indian Hills for our annual MGCSA Guest Scramble Tournament. Arrangements Chairman Russ Adams has come up with an even more equitable scramble arrangement this year. Get those pre-registrations in quickly. First in get first preference of shotgun times.