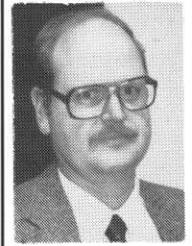


Proper Planting and Post-Planting Care are Keys To Successfully Establish Trees and Shrubs

By Bob Mugaas, Minnesota Extension Service



PART II POST-PLANTING CARE*

Watering: Newly planted plants require routine watering. Soils and weather conditions will dictate how often and how much water to apply. Examine the soil moisture 4 - 8 inches deep to determine the need for water. If the soil feels dry or just slightly damp, watering is needed. Soil type and drainage must also be considered. Well-drained, sandy soil will need more than a clay soil that may hold too much water. A slow trickle of the garden hose at the base of the plant for several hours or until the soil is thoroughly soaked is the best method. Short, frequent watering should be avoided as this does not promote deep root growth but rather, the development of a shallow root system which is vulnerable to several to several environmental stresses.

Mulching: Adding a mulch around the base of the plant is a very important part of plant care that is often overlooked. By mulching plants, a more favorable environment is provided for the tree roots. A mulch allows better infiltration of water, holds soil moisture, limits weed growth, and discourages injury from lawnmowers and weed whips.

A 3 - 6 inch layer of mulch, spread to form a 3 - 6 foot diameter circle around the plant should be applied. Keep the mulch area from direct contact with the tree trunk. Wood and bark chips are good mulching materials. A porous landscape fabric that allows gas and water exchange can be used a weed barrier underneath the chips. Plastic under mulch can cause roots to "suffocate" and is not recommended.

Fertilization: Fertilization of established plants should be done every 2 - 3 years in the fall after leaves have fallen or in early spring before growth begins.

It can be applied to the surface or placed in holes around the plants. Beware of burning turf if surface-applied. Surface applications should be watered in. Do not apply nitrogen in late summer unless the plant is nutrient deficient, as this can promote new growth that may not harden off properly and can be damaged by winter weather. Phosphorous and potassium can be applied in the fall as they will enhance winter acclimation.

Pruning: Proper pruning is vital to the health and structure of many plants. Any damaged limbs, and crossing or rubbing branches should be pruned when planting. The pruning cut should leave the branch collar without leaving a stub. Improper cuts can lead to disease problems and decay. Prune when trees are dormant, never when leaves are falling. Trees that "bleed" should be pruned in August. Oak trees *should not* be pruned between April 15 and July 1 due to possible spread of oak wilt disease. If pruning of oaks during this time is unavoidable, or if trees are damaged by storms or construction, apply a non-toxic pruning paint *immediately*. Pruning paint is not recommended for other pruning cuts or wounds.

Staking: Most newly planted trees will do better without staking. Young trees standing alone with their tops free to move will develop stronger, more resilient trunks than those staked for several years. trunk movement is required to develop strong, tapered trunks.

If however, a tree is unstable in a strong wind or is pushed over, then staking is required. A common problem with staking trees is the girdling effect that the ties can have on the tree. A piece of garden hose around the wire and a loop to allow movement can reduce this damage. Also soft nylon webbing or carpet strips can be attached by gommets to a stake. Often, wire is too tight around

the trunk and will effectively girdle and kill the tree. Whatever material is used, be sure to allow for some movement and *remove the stake and ties* once the tree is established — usually after one year.

Winter Care: Proper winter care begins in the summer. Proper watering and fertilization in spring and summer is required. Watering can be decreased in early fall and increased in late fall to provide water needed to withstand the drying winds of winter. Plants need to go dormant; don't encourage late growth by heavy watering and nitrogen fertilization in early fall. Plants should be thoroughly watered in late fall just prior to the soil freezing.

Sunscald, characterized by sunken, dried, or cracked bark, is caused by the heating effect of the winter sun in cold weather. It usually occurs on the south or southwest side of the tree. In the fall, wrap young and/or thin-barked trees with commercial tree wrap from the bottom up to the first major branch. Remove the wrap in spring. Thin-barked species such as maples and honeylocusts may require protection for several years.

Winter browning of evergreens is normally caused by the combined effects of wind and sun. Trees lose water from the leaves (needles) while roots are in frozen soil. To protect evergreens, place a screen of burlap or similar material on the south, west, and windward side of the tree to block wind and sun. Antidesiccant sprays are not very effective in offsetting the drying effects. Water evergreens well throughout the growing season, lightly in September, and then thoroughly again before the soil freezes. Select species and cultivars that tolerate winter conditions. Plant species susceptible to winter injury in areas of minimal exposure to winter wind and sun.

Animal damage can be severe during

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Proper Planting—

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the winter. To protect individual trees from mice, place a cylinder of ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth or plastic drain pipe (it should not be black in color) around the trunk. The cylinder should extend high enough to prevent animals from feeding at snow level, and should be firmly anchored in the soil without disturbing the tree roots. Protection from rabbits requires coverage of up to 1 to 2 feet above snow level. Other means of fencing or animal control may be needed. If many trees and shrubs are to be protected, application of a commercial repellent may be more practical. The repellent can be sprayed or painted on the trunks and branches. The effectiveness and duration of the repellent will depend on the severity of the winter and the availability of other food.

*Adapted from Minnesota Extension Service publication (AG-FO-3825) "Planting and Transplanting Trees and Shrubs" by Bert T. Swanson, James B. Calkins, Peter-Jon Rudquist, and Steven Shimek.

Lyme Disease—

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- Keep weeds cleared and shrubs trimmed.
- Clean up leaf piles and organic debris and do not allow it to accumulate.
- Move wood piles away from the house and play areas.
- Inspect your home for possible entry sites for rodents.
- Move bird feeders away from living or play areas.

Dress the Part When Outdoors

The threat of getting Lyme disease shouldn't keep anyone

from enjoying the outdoors. If you plan on being in a tick-prone area, dressing properly is one way of reducing your chances of coming into contact with ticks.

- Wear light-colored clothing, so ticks will be easier to spot.
- Wear long-sleeve shirts with collars.
- Wear long pants.
- Tuck your pants into the top of your boots or inside your socks.
- Wear your hair tucked up into a cap away from your neck.
- Use an effective insect repellent.
- After being outside, check yourself for ticks, and shower or bathe thoroughly before going to bed.

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