

**A**fter the rush of spring, and the demands of summer, the fall can be a time when things slow down enough that tree planting can be fit into the schedule. While not necessarily the best time for planting, as root regeneration will not be as great as when planting in the spring, good scheduling and proper post-planting care can mean successful tree establishment.

As when planting in the spring, efforts must be made to keep the roots from drying out and moving trees on dry, hot, windy or cold days should be avoided. Trees should be well watered as a dry fall and a cold winter are not conducive to tree vitality or survival. But the soil should not be too wet either. Mulching is also important,

even at this time of year. If the site is prone to winter winds, this may be a situation where staking (with suitable materials and not ... wire through a piece of garden hose) is appropriate as the recently planted tree may not have sufficient root growth into the parent soil to keep it up-right, or winter winds may cause excessive tree movement,

tearing the newly established roots in the transition area between the planting hole and the parent soil. Thin-barked trees may be more susceptible to sunscald in the winter as they are not likely to be acclimatized to the new situation; so protective wrapping can be left on the tree trunk but must be removed in the early spring. Young trees can actually photosynthesize through their bark tissue and will need all the available surface area.

Balled-and burlapped or container stock are most suitable for fall planting and use of bareroot should be avoided. Double-check the root condition of the planting stock to be sure that the roots are in reasonable condition.

Deciduous trees are best transplanted after the leaves have turned color and dropped. In colder climates this is best done at least a month

before the soil freezes to allow time for some root development. In warmer climates, the window of opportunity is much larger. Conifers can be transplanted in the late summer and early fall. Once the buds have set and shoot elongation is completed the trees are better able to withstand transplanting, however, high temperatures and water stress should be avoided so take local climate into account.

There are benefits to fall planting: the soil is warmer and may have more moisture (or the climate may be subject to autumnal rains), encouraging some root growth prior to the winter. Transpiration of conifers and broad-leaved evergreens should be reduced due to shorter days and cooler temperatures.

There are species which should not be planted and some nurseries will not guarantee some tree species for fall planting. It is a good idea to check with your nursery supplier to make sure your trees are guaranteed if planted in the fall. According to information from the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, IL, species commonly recommended for spring planting only include: the families of birches (*Betula* spp.), beeches (*Fagus* spp.), dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.), cherries, apricots and plums (*Prunus* spp.), hickories (*Carya* spp.), poplars (*Populus* spp.), larches (*Larix* spp.), willows (*Salix* spp.), hemlocks (*Tsuga* spp.), magnolias (*Magnolia* spp.) and most of the oaks (*Quercus* spp.) except English and pin. Other tree species include: yellowwood (*Cladastris lutea*), tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) and baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*).

On the other hand, keep in mind that planting failures may be as much due to poor planting stock condition, poor site selection, poor planting practices or poor post-planting care as to tree species. The extremes of winter can be even less forgiving to a poorly planted tree than the summer because you can't see the response of the tree reflected in the leaves. Exercise care in these aspects and tree survival should be more likely and hopefully those that do survive look good too. **LM**

Agree/Disagree? Comments/Questions? Column Suggestions? Let Nancy Stairs know at 440/891-2623. Fax: 440/891-2675. E-Mail: [nstairs@advanstar.com](mailto:nstairs@advanstar.com)

## Thoughts on fall planting



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