

# Transplants need nutritional boost



With most ornamental plants transplanted to alien environments, special care is needed to enable them to flourish.

Landscapers today face a formidable challenge: most ornamental plants used in the landscape trade are not indigenous to the habitats in which they're expected to flourish. Moreover, climate extremes and soil depleted of nutrients have made outdoor environments more adverse to plants. So, how do you ensure these transplants thrive?

Transplanting itself is traumatic to plants; uprooting a tree, a bush or even a small flowering plant disturbs its place in the environment. Extra care is needed in order to make the transplanted vegetation take root and subsequently thrive. Access to water is just the beginning. Plants must make or receive many vitamins, hormones and other compounds of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen in order to flourish.

## It's quite a shock

"Transplanting a tree is like performing surgery on a person," says Tom Lied, past president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America (now the Professional Landcare Network). "It's a great shock to its system. You don't expect to feed a steak

dinner to someone right after they've undergone major surgery. You have to stabilize the patient's system first and make sure the healing process is underway. It's the same with a plant. When a plant's in shock, it can't produce the substances that it needs to stabilize and nourish it. It is temporarily unable to produce the organic 'triggers' that enable it to absorb enough water and nutrients out of the soil. Fertilizer alone won't help if the plant isn't producing these organic triggers."

By studying the effects of transplantation on trees and other plants, however, science can now help plants cope with a range of stresses, whether caused by weather extremes, a lack of nutrients or other imbalances in the soil.

John A. A. Thomson, an early student of the massive transplantation of vegetation throughout North America, realized how transplants affected the work of landscapers. He worked on the practical uses of horticultural hormones and vitamins and in 1939 parlayed this interest in plant nutrition into a concentrated formula for plants that contains 50 vitamins and hormones (trade name SUPERthrive).

"Most ornamental plants you now find

in North America are not native to the region," says Thomson. "But other stresses of all sorts have increased as well, from deteriorated soil composition to climate extremes or other factors."

## The needed extra boost

Landscapers have found the product helps when they move plants around.

"I've used it for as long as I can remember, and in that time have never lost a tree that we dug up and transplanted by hand," says Ted Burton of J.H. Burton & Sons, Hyattsville, MD. "And one time we dug up a big tree by hand in Richmond (Virginia), and then had to truck it all the way through Washington D. C., to Baltimore. Within a couple days the tree looked as though it had been growing there all its life.

"I also found that it really helps the germination of regular seed. It cuts the germination period from about eight to 10 days down to three to four days. No doubt about its effectiveness."

Thomson says that homeowners' desire for ornamentals will continue. "People will continue to want beautiful, exotic, colorful plants around them," he says.

"These plants are available, and landscapers who are able to see that they thrive are more likely to do well themselves."

For more information, visit the Vitamin Institute Web site at

[www.superthrive.com](http://www.superthrive.com) LM