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Planting Or Transplanting A Tree

By Paul Curran

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In planting or transplanting a tree, and in building on a lot where you wish to preserve the trees, the gardener's chief consideration must be to protect the root structure of the tree. The big roots near the stem anchor the tree to the ground, while the fine root hairs at the ends of the rootlets absorb the water from the soil.

In planting trees, their mature height and spread must be considered before a selection is made. Tempting as are the nursery catalogs, it is necessary to choose carefully, especially on the average lot, because crowding spoils the growth and appearance of trees, particularly specimen trees.

In general, it is wisest and most economical to plant young trees. Planting a mature tree is difficult and, if done professionally, costly. If, however, a mature tree is badly needed for a terrace or for screening, it may well justify the expense. What you are buying is the time it takes a smaller tree to mature.

Today you can plant trees when in full leaf with the aid of new wilt-proof sprays that seal the leaves against moisture loss until the roots are established. This, however, costs money and entails greater risks than buying your tree and planting it in early spring(the best time) or late fall or winter.

If you are planting a tree over 6 feet tall, it will suffer less setback if moved with a bur-lapped root ball. The soil preparation described in the previous chapter is helpful for most

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tree and shrub planting. But since the root system must have fertile soil when it is planted, special steps must be taken.

Dig a hole 2 feet deep and at least 1 foot wider each way than the full spread of the roots. The bottom of the hole should be broken up with a pitchfork and thoroughly mixed with peat, leaf mold, loam, etc. Manure should be used sparingly and only on the top of the hole as it burns the roots.

The deeper you can cultivate your hole, the better for your tree. Once it is planted, you can cultivate around it but not under the roots. If you strike a subsoil of building rubble or clay, which

you are very apt to find anywhere near a house and in which a tree cannot grow, this subsoil must be removed and good soil, or better still, garden humus, substituted for it.

If you are planting a seedling that is not balled and burlapped, you will want to protect it by "heeling in" a vacant flower bed where it may be kept before planting as long as dormant. This means laying it on its side and covering the roots with good soil. When you take it from the soil, give it a mud bath or "puddle" it.

Puddling protects the roots from exposure to air before planting

and also from any air pockets which may exist after planting. Having filled the hole to the depth required by the roots of the plant, flood it with water to settle the soil at the bottom; when this has drained away, place the tree in the position in which it is to grow and settle the soil about it.

Use a stick or shovel handle to work the soil around the roots, and make certain there are no air pockets. Spread the roots out naturally, planting the tree at about the same depth as in the nursery or its former location. When the hole is two-thirds full, trample it down and again fill with water. Don't firm down the remaining soil, so that the water will drain towards the trunk.

A balled-and-burlapped tree is one dug with a solid ball of rich, heavy loam in which it has been growing in the nursery for years, its root system thus amply covered and protected. The ball is firmed and held in place by a secure covering of twine and burlap.

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To plant it, set the tree in a hole a trifle lower than it stood in the nursery. Work the soil beneath this depth, as directed above. Dig the hole about twice the size of your ball and plant at once. If the ground is dry at planting time, fill the hole with water and let it soak away before planting.

Cut the burlap at the top when you put the ball in place, rolling it back 3 or 4 inches. Plant ball, burlap and all—the burlap will soon rot away. If you are planting a big tree, it is transported in a truck, lowered to the ground by winches, rolled along a plank track on rollers and maneuvered into the exact center of the hole on a single board.

A holding rope from the truck to the base of the tree trunk helps to position the tree. After the tree is planted, cutting back is proper. Cut back sharply at least one-third, pruning the branches. It is necessary to brace the tree with wire ropes so

that the roots will not be broken by the wind.

Use a single wire around the trunk and three guy wires. For the first year after planting, the more cultivation the better. Keep weeds away, too, with straw or mulch, and strawy manure mulch in the spring and fall will help keep the moisture in the ground.

Paul Curran is CEO of Cuzcom Internet Publishing Group and webmaster at Trees-and-Bushes.com, providing access to their nursery supplier for a range of quality plants, trees, bushes, shrubs, seeds and garden products.

MY KINGDOM FOR A TREE

By Arleen M. Kaptur

MY KINGDOM FOR A TREE by Arleen M. Kaptur

When you decide that you would like to raise some fruit trees in your garden area, its time to find the ideal plant to start with.

The best trees are at least two years old and from 3–5 feet tall. They will survive the disturbing transplanting process and also bear fruit faster.

Start with a reputable garden nursery that you trust. The young trees should have their roots wrapped

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in damp packing material and plastic. This prevents the roots from drying out and causing the tree to die.

When you get your tree home, leave it in a cool, shaded area, with the packing material intact. On the day you intend to plant it, remove the material and place the roots in a pail of water to soak ideally overnight. Make a large hole, at least half the size of the full spread of the tree's root system. Use rich topsoil in the bottom of the hole to give added nourishment and strength to your fruit tree. To loosen the soil and give the area a chance at good moisture and drainage, mix 1 part peat moss to ever 2 parts of topsoil.

If the ground you are working with is extremely acid, use limestone to bring it to good planting earth.

Do not use fertilize when you plant your tree. Most soils are just fine for normal growth and the disturbed roots will be extremely sensitive to burning by chemical fertilizers.

You may use a fertilizer when the roots are established and have taken to the area.

Prune your tree to give it added strength. Giving your new tree a little careful attention when planting will insure a healthy, strong tree to bear all the fruit that you want it to produce.

After planting and pruning, water the tree thoroughly and give it a pailful of water every week during the spring and summer months, except when it rains. Use a little less water then but equivalent to the

pailful. To keep the moisture around your tree and keep weeds from growing, spread a mulch of ground bark or wood chips about 3–4 inches deep around the trunk, with a shallow moat of earth made to hold the water until it is absorbed.

If you follow a few precautionary planting tips such as those above, you will be far ahead in your quest for healthy plants and abundant harvests.

So get ready for those apple, cherry, or pear dessert ideas. Enjoy!

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Arleen Kaptur has written numerous articles, e–books and the novel: **SEARCHING FOR AUSTIN JAMES** Websites:

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