



# TREE NEWS

NOVEMBER 2020

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## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

### SELECTING AND ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT PLANT: FALL PLANTING PART 2

Fall in Tennessee is a great time to enjoy the beauty of mature trees around our homes, offices, or the great outdoors. It's also be a great time to invest in trees that will be enjoyed in the future.

Water management is essential in the first few months after planting. Water in the soil contains dissolved minerals and nutrients that are accessed by young tree roots, so it's essential for nutrition and growth. Root growth depends on soil temperatures, and often, the soil retains warmth and enables root growth in the fall. This fall root growth will be valuable in establishing a foundation of healthy, young roots in the new site to support the young tree the following spring. Water in the soil doesn't just provide nutrients, though. It can also be a buffer for temperature change, as it will cool more slowly than air. That means soil with adequate moisture provides a more consistent environment and reduces drastic changes in temperature for the young roots. Trees that are well hydrated will be able to withstand colder temperatures above ground as well.

Fall is often the driest time of year in our state, but averages don't always hold true. Pay careful attention to soil moisture to ensure that young tree roots don't dry out after planting. Even in winter, a once or twice monthly watering may be needed. Water slowly so the water can percolate deeply into the soil, then check to see how deeply the soil is moistened. Water the whole planting area, not just around the trunk. Watering practices and timing will need to be tailored to your site. A layer of mulch (not a mound) can also be useful in helping keep soil moisture consistent. While proper moisture is critical for young trees, overwatering or poor drainage around the young plant can be devastating in winter. So don't guess at how much water is accessible to your young trees—investigate.

For fall-planted trees, water generously, and prune hesitantly. If a young plant has diseased or damaged branches, they should be removed at planting. However, for most young trees, any training cuts or more serious pruning should be delayed a few months for a late winter dormant pruning. A young, actively growing tree that is pruned hard late in the growing season (August–November) may produce lush, tender growth in response to such pruning. This tender new growth is often not hardened and will be frequently damaged by winter cold. So water well but prune lightly in the fall-winter season, and put your young trees in a position to thrive next year!



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### TUFC Webinar Series

We've teamed up with the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council (TUFC) to bring you four free educational seminars to help you manage urban forests.

Please join us for the second webinar on 11/19: **Proactive Pest Management in Winter and Spring**, presented by Dr. Frank Hale.

Get more information on the content of this webinar at the [UT Urban Forestry Extension](#) page.

Please note that [registration](#) is required.

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