



TREE NEWS

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YOU CAN USE

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

FALL PLANTING SEASON IS UNDERWAY

It's planting season in Tennessee! With a little planning, you can ensure that new trees will be around for decades or even centuries. Many stress-related and physiological disorders can be traced back to improper planting practices (Dreistadt et. al., 2004).

When planting a new tree, consider a few important questions first!

- What is the goal of the planting? Do you want a large overstory tree that produces shade or a smaller understory tree that exhibits spring or fall coloration?
- Is the area conducive for the species you've chosen?
- What amount of input (time and/or money) are you willing to invest, long-term?
- What types of soils are present in the area, and do they adequately drain for the species you've selected?
- Are there microclimates that should be considered (a microclimate is a small area within the surrounding larger area with different climate)?
- What could be damaged by the tree if it fails later in life?

Trees are purchased from the nursery in three primary ways: balled and burlapped, container grown, and bareroot. No matter which option you choose, it is important to look for a few key features. Select high-quality nursery stock that is free of any obvious injuries, pests, or diseases. Choose plants that have newly-formed active growth with good trunk taper. Avoid trees that have been topped (or tipped), giving the appearance of a "fuller" tree. For grafted trees, make sure the graft unions are high quality and that the graft union is at an appropriate height consistent with the soil line. Lastly, be aware that container-grown plants may develop numerous, girdling roots during their time at the nursery.

Once you have found your ideal specimen, traveling home with it safely is just as important as the selection process. Protect your new tree from excessive winds when travelling, lift trees only by the root ball and/or container, and keep the trees watered until they are planted. In most cases, using the native soil is preferred. Be cautious about creating soils with different water-holding capacities. If organic amendments are needed, these should constitute no more than 20% of the soil volume, and any soil amendments should be thoroughly incorporated before planting (Dreistadt et. al., 2004).



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Common pitfalls to avoid when planting:

- Selecting the wrong species for the site
- Planting new trees too deeply or not deep enough
- Physically damaging the trunk during installation
- Improper watering schedules (under/over watering)
- Removing live foliage from newly-planted trees
- Improper application of mulches



Planting a tree too deeply can lead to long-term problems, such as the bacterial canker on this cherry tree.

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