

## Fall is for Planting!

There is no better time of year to choose the perfect shade tree. The warm days and cool nights set the trees ablaze with color. The hustle and bustle of spring fever is gone. The pace of life in the nursery seems to slow to that of a falling leaf and, it becomes very difficult to work up a sweat with the crisp weather. There is also, no better time to plant a shade tree. The ground is still warm, but will be cooling with the first few rains making the transition from container to ground easier. The trees will be dormant soon, so shock from transplant is almost non-existent. The long dormant season will allow the trees to develop a good root system before the spring season. This developed root system will be able to support an abundance of new spring growth. With no leaves, these sleeping transplants are able to withstand even the coldest of our winters. Having no leaves, or sails to catch the wind, also removes the danger of blowing over with a small root mass while trying to establish. When planting in the spring, the tree is temporarily set back by the need to establish a root mass. High winds can continually dislodge the roots while trying to establish, even with proper staking. This coupled with an early heat wave can be devastating to the health of your newly planted tree. Think fall for planting!

Deciduous trees are trees, which drop all their leaves. Most of the deciduous trees will provide you with great fall color; there are exceptions to every rule. Planting these trees on the west side, the hot afternoon sun side, will help to keep your home cool in the summer. By losing all their leaves in the winter, they allow the sun to help warm you house in the winter. When choosing your tree, keep a few things in mind, the first being size. Too many times I see 40-60 foot tall trees planted several feet from the house. This is not a good idea. Even the most behaved rooting trees will cause damage to foundations or other solid structures when planted too close. Also, planting trees with a 30-foot canopy against the fence is not very friendly unless your neighbor wants half a tree. Choose a tree with a size and shape to fit the area at maturity, not the present. Think of them as babies when you plant them, they will grow. Secondly, think of the reason for planting the tree. Are you trying to achieve shade, screening out a neighbor for privacy or just for accent in the landscape? Broad spreading canopy type trees offer the most shade. Narrower growing columnar type trees will offer a greater amount of privacy because they can be planted closer together to form a wall. Choosing a tree for accent is the easiest situation to choose for. You simply find the tree you like, providing you follow rule number one. Expert advice from a nursery professional will help you decide which tree is best for your needs.

Planting your trees: Digging the hole is no picnic in the foothills. It would not be the mountains if it were not hard as rock. A well-prepared rain dance will help to soften things up. If this fails, soaking the ground manually a few days before you plan on digging will help. Remember; make it easier on yourself, shallow wide holes. Digging deep oversized holes is a waste of energy and will not benefit the tree in the long run. A deep hole is likely to settle and then your tree will settle too deep. This will likely cause root problems for your new tree. Also, digging a deep hole can be like creating a sump, or low spot for all the water to collect in. This too will likely cause root problems. Dig a hole no deeper than the root ball of the tree you are planting. Dig two-three times the width. Amend your soil-rock with a good soil conditioner or compost. Use a ratio of 1/3 compost mixed with 2/3 existing native soil. The idea is to create a transition zone between the rich soil growers use to grow your tree in, and the crummy stuff you had to

dig in. This helps the roots start to develop, and inside a year the organic soil amendment will break down leaving the tree to grow in essentially native soil. Remove any stake that is tied close to the trunk of the tree. If the tree is able to hold itself up easily, staking is not necessary. Double stake the tree if needed to hold it up, or if located in a windy area. Most trees need to be staked for one growing season only. Tie tree loosely to each stake allowing the tree to move. This will help to develop a strong healthy taper to the trunk. Keeping a tree staked too firmly is like having a cast on you arm. It will weaken from lack of movement. Always use a starter fertilizer high in Phosphorus, the middle number in all fertilizers, and low in Nitrogen, the first number, to help develop new roots. Feed again in the early spring with a more balanced fertilizer, all three numbers equal.

See our List of Favorites! Enjoy the fall color year after year!

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