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## Trees

Maybe I talk about trees too much but they truly do provide us with so many advantages, it is hard to keep them off my mind. We are approaching the best time of year for planting new trees. Sometimes it is nice to talk about the basics.

Before you plant a new or young tree take some time to select the proper variety for what you are trying to accomplish. If your yard is small then don't expect to grow a tree that is 70 feet tall. If you have power lines running through your yard then select trees that are 15 feet or less in height. Remember to pick out trees designated for our USDA plant hardiness zone, 6b (-5 to 0 degree F) for Kennett and 7a (0 to 5 degree F) as you move further south. Stay away from trees that are known to be problematic. These are trees that attract disease and insects or are weak wooded.

Don't settle for what you find at a discount store if you truly have a tree in mind that you want. A tree is an investment. It removes pollutants from the air, provides shade for us and our homes, gives us oxygen, provides us with beauty, increases the value of our homes, increases the aesthetic beauty of our yards and gives us a topic of conversation as it changes with the season.

Once you have selected the tree that you want then you must take care to plant it correctly. Always dig a hole three times as wide as the width of the root ball and to the same depth. You want to give the roots plenty of room to grow but you want to make sure you don't plant the tree too deep. The depth may need altering. Plant a little high if you have a gumbo soil but if you have a dominantly sandy soil then go as deep as the previous soil line when you plant. The soil line can be seen on the tree trunk as a point where the bark changes color from the trunk near the soil line.

When you remove the tree from the pot then rough-up the roots around all sides of the root ball. If you break some off that is fine, it will initiate new growth. If there is an excessive amount of roots or if they are growing in a circle then you want to break some roots off and truly rough them around to break them up. If you are planting from a ball and burlap tree then remove the top half of the burlap, set the ball in the hole and remove the rest of the burlap by leaning the tree to one side before setting straight for planting.

You do not have to add amendments to the planting hole but a small amount of fertilizer and organic matter may help. Most losses to newly planted trees occur from incorrect watering.

When you get a new tree it is used to being watered once or twice each day. Continue watering for the first week after planting unless the soil remains wet. After the first week water once per week for the first year, then once every other week and by the third year you should be able to water once per month. Remember to increase watering if it remains dry and decrease if we are getting rain.

Help your new tree by pruning off any dead or diseased tissue or anything that is growing toward the center of the tree or rubbing the wood of the tree. This will help encourage healthy growth and reduce the wounds that might allow disease or insects to invade a tree.

There are several guide sheets available through extension to help you pick a good tree for your situation. These guides titled “Selecting Landscape Plants...” are available at your local extension office.

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