“The Right Tree in the Right Place”

When you decide to plant a tree, these are words of wisdom that will save you headaches and money in the long run. A tree or shrub that is planted too close to your house, driveway or sidewalk, could turn into a maintenance nightmare. And if you end up having to remove this tree, it will likely cost you plenty. The following is a list of questions you should ask yourself BEFORE you choose a species:

How tall and how wide will this tree be at maturity?
(The last thing you want is to have to make large pruning cuts to avoid damage to your roof, gutter, or obstruct your driveway/sidewalk. Topping trees to reduce their size or promote growth is an unnatural, detrimental practice that is highly discouraged by all certified arborists)

Are there power lines of any kind to consider?
(You should not plant trees under the power lines. If they do not remove it entirely, the utility company will severely prune these trees for line clearance and the tree will eventually need to be removed – probably at your expense.)

Does this species have a fruit that can be messy or attract unwanted wildlife?
(Fruit trees can attract birds, bees, insects, mammals, etc., many of which will create a mess on your home, vehicles, just about everything. Some animals can actually cause physical damage to your property as well)

Are the flowers fragrant or do they have a foul odor?
(While some flowers are fragrant, some can end up with a foul smell to them. This can make your yard very unpleasant at times)

Will this tree shade too much of my yard and make it tough to grow grass under it?
(Large shade trees can make it very difficult to grow flowers or grass. Another consideration would be natural sunlight reaching your home. This can affect heating/cooling costs in your home during daylight hours and could promote mold and algae growth on the exterior of your house)

What diseases or other problems are associated with this species?
(Check to see what the average lifespan of the tree is. Will it need periodic treatments for disease/insect control and how often will it need to be fertilized?)

Does this tree do well in our climate?
(You can check the hardiness zone to see what trees are recommended for the area you are planting in)

How does this tree hold up to wind or ice/snow?
(Some species such as ornamentals are susceptible to splitting in wind storms and evergreens can suffer severe damage in ice storms)

Will this tree need to be pruned or thinned out often – are there other maintenance concerns?
(Low maintenance is a desirable trait when choosing a tree. Time and money being the main concerns)

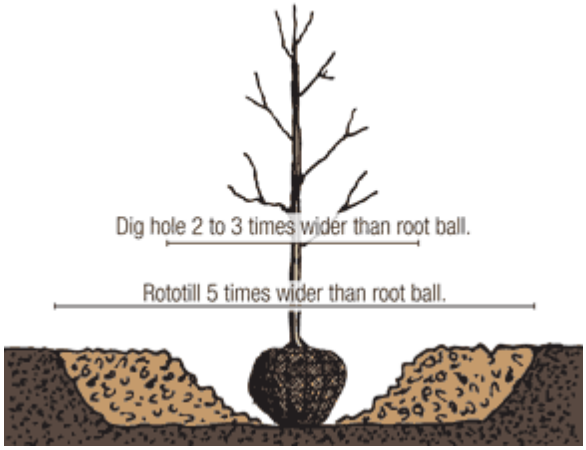
Is there enough room for the roots to grow outward without hitting concrete/asphalt?
(Many tree roots spread outside the drip zone of the canopy. Street trees between sidewalks/streets do not generally have the room to grow naturally)

What type of soil will you be planting in – is there a lot of clay or rocky fill dirt in your yard?
(Soil with too much clay will not drain properly and have low oxygen levels. A planting hole with too much rock will not allow the roots to spread properly)

What is the growth rate of the tree you have chosen?
(How quickly do you want or need a mature tree? Smaller trees generally grow fairly fast, while larger Oaks, Walnuts, Hickory, etc., are slow growing. Most ornamentals only have a lifespan of 15 – 20 years. Most hardwood trees will last much longer – generally 50-80 years or more)

The lesson here is to do your homework. Research, visit your local nursery, or drive around the neighborhood and look at trees of the same species you are thinking of planting. You will save yourself a lot of guess work!

"Tree Planting Tips"



Tree planting is much more than just digging a hole and dropping the tree in. Proper care must be exercised during the transportation and planting processes. Here are some basic practices to follow as you pick out your tree at the nursery/garden center, transport it home, and then plant it:

Prior to Planting

- Pick a tree that appears healthy. One that has green leaves, no scarring of the trunk, free from insects or abnormal growths.
- The tree should have good form, be fairly symmetrical, with no splitting or cracking of the trunk.
- The root ball should be tightly packed. The tree should not be wobbling loosely whether it is in a basket or containerized.
- Whether you load the tree or the attendant does, do not grab the tree by the trunk to lift it as this will loosen the roots from the ball. If it is in a container – hold it by the container. If it is in a wire basket, use tree or hay hooks to lift it.
- Most should be laid on their sides for transport. Do this gently, once on the truck. Support the trunk and do not let all the weight bear on the crown of the tree as this will also loosen the ball.
- Be careful not to scar the tree bark during loading, unloading, and planting. Damage to the trunk will affect the tree's capability to transfer needed water and minerals between the roots and canopy.
- Should you need to drive 40 mph or over on your way to the planting site, you will need to tarp the canopy of the tree. This will avoid leaf burn which will stress the tree and hinder its' ability to photosynthesize.

Planting

- Whether the tree is balled and bur lapped, or in a container, the first thing to do is to determine where the root flare is. The root flare is the area where the trunk meets the first root. You may need to pull back soil from the trunk to find this area. (Many trees have soil or mulch covering this up) This will determine the depth of planting.
- The tree should be planted with the root flare visible. It is better to plant the tree slightly high to allow for settling. (Trees that are planted too low are susceptible to disease and shorter lifespan.)
- Dig the hole to and place tree into the ground using care not lift to by the trunk.

(Please follow the diagram below for the proper hole size and planting details)
After determining the tree is at the right height, straighten the tree so that it sits plumb on all sides. If the tree is in a wire basket, cut away as much of the wire as possible before proceeding. If it is in a container, check for roots encircling the ball. Spread out what you can and if necessary, prune these roots so they will grow outward and not girdle the tree. (Always cut away any ropes, strings, zip ties, etc., which will restrict the growth of the tree.)
Begin to backfill, making sure to push dirt under the ball to stabilize it. Step on the soil all around the tree to gently compact it as you go. Do not shovel all the dirt in and try to compact it afterwards. You will leave air pockets which will lead to root and settling issues.
After back filling is complete, water the tree before you mulch. This will keep the mulch from initially soaking up water meant for the tree.
Mulching
It is very important to keep your tree mulched. It will help regulate the temperature of the roots, help

retain moisture, keeps the lawn mower away from the tree, and restricts the weeds from growing next to the tree. (Weed eater damage kills a large number of young trees)
Do not pile mulch against the tree trunk. Remember, the root flare should be left exposed. A proper mulch ring will look like a bagel – not a volcano! The bagel shape will have a depression in the middle which will retain water, whereas a volcano shape will encourage water to run away from the tree.
After mulching, water your tree again slowly to ensure a proper saturation of the planting hole.

Staking

Young trees should be staked – preferably on 2-3 sides. Never with only 1 stake. Protect the trunk and branches from getting wounds from ropes and ties by using small pieces of rubber hose or similar materials. These should be placed between the tree and the tie. To allow the tree roots to anchor properly, trees should be left staked for 6 months to a year and then removed. If left staked for longer periods, the tree will grow dependent on the support stakes and will not grow properly.

Maintenance

Trees should be watered during times of reduced rainfall. To correctly water a tree, soak it slowly with a hose or use a tree gator. Water in early morning or evening to reduce evaporation. Do not water every day. You can actually drown the tree. Two times a week will be enough. When placing subsequent mulch around your tree, pull back the old mulch from the trunk to keep from
covering up the root flare. Avoid string trimmer and mower damage. It does not take a large wound to affect your trees' health. Prune broken branches back to the nearest bud. This will help to prevent insect and disease problems. Planting flowers or perennials under your tree can rob your tree of water and you may damage shallow roots during planting. When digging in your yard, remember that a trees' roots can grow outside of the drip line of the canopy. So try to stay away from digging near your trees. Never allow heavy vehicles or equipment to work/park under or near your trees. This will result in compaction of the roots and will severely stress your tree and could even kill it. Many trees that are trying to be saved during construction will actually die in a few years (3-7) due to compaction issues or root damage during excavation. NEVER, EVER, Top Your Tree! This will lead to poor branch attachment, abnormal growth, tree decline/mortality, and is just downright UGLY! This practice is highly discouraged by all certified arborists.

A Final Word

Do your homework BEFORE you plant a tree. There is a myriad of information on the internet, at the library or book store, MDC office, or consult your local nursery/garden center. Many potential problems can be avoided this way.

Remember… "PLANT THE RIGHT TREE IN THE RIGHT PLACE!"

Please contact Brian Hibdon - Superintendent of Maintenance, if you have further questions at: 729-4730