

Tree Planting in Missouri

Citizen's Guide

to Community

Tree Planting

in Missouri

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Forest ReLeaf of Missouri*

Planting a tree has been described as the ultimate act of optimism and sharing — a meaningful opportunity to make a positive impact on our environment.

Trees dramatically improve the quality of our lives. They help make our communities more livable and more attractive. They provide us with a cleaner and cooler environment. They make an economic difference, saving us money in energy consumption, increasing property value and boosting business and tourism.

While the benefits of trees may be important, so is the act of planting them. Planting requires forethought, planning and responsibility. In fact, it is estimated that young trees will grow twice as fast when planted correctly and live at least twice as long as those planted improperly.

This booklet is offered by Forest ReLeaf of Missouri to the volunteers in our state who wish to participate in keeping their communities green and livable for generations to come.

First, a Word about Tree Inventories: Taking Stock of Your Community Forest

You're interested in planting trees in your community — and we're glad you are. Before you begin, take stock of your community's forest.

While the first step in planting is to select a planting site, the best way to determine where trees are needed is to conduct an inventory of your community forest. That means literally noting the types, numbers and locations of the trees in your community. An inventory is a necessary first step toward good management of the tree resource and will provide excellent information on available planting spaces.

According to The National Arbor Day Foundation, a community forest inventory can:

- Raise public support for proper management of the community forest;
- Provide accurate, insightful information regarding the composition (species, size, age) of the community forest;
- Determine tree maintenance needs and provide a sound basis for the number of people needed to care for these community assets;

*The best
time to plant
a tree was
20 years
ago. The
second best
time is now.*

Anonymous



*One in a
series of
guides on
community
organizing
for urban
forests.*

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- Establish the monetary value of community trees and convincingly show the effects of budgeting and management on the resource value; and
- Reveal planting needs and suggest priorities to assure balance and diversity.

You may discover in your research that conducting a tree inventory may take priority over planting more trees. This is not a daunting task. There are simple inventory techniques that quickly can provide valuable information. For more information on how to conduct a community tree inventory, contact the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Places to Plant Trees

Most community greening efforts take place in parks, schools or common grounds, or at government buildings, such as a city hall. They are all excellent planting locations. But take a trip through your community and look for areas in need of greening that may never be considered by anyone else. Note how many areas are in dire need of trees. Most communities are unable to plant as many trees as they remove, often creating large gaps in what could be an oasis of green somewhere in your community. Prime examples might include:

- A vacant lot in a heavily urbanized area
- A cemetery
- Public library
- Public picnic or rest area or historical site
- Screening a sewage treatment plant or lagoon
- Streets in the community or town square

Consider locations that are appropriate, yet sorely in need of trees. The best sites are those where a planting will have a strong visual impact. If you are having a difficult time with site selection, contact your community leaders and let them provide you with some inspiration.

Once you have selected a spot, it is critical to carefully evaluate the site before proceeding any further. This is a very important and often overlooked step, whether the site is a municipal park or your backyard. Here are some questions that you should ask as you consider planting locations:

Why am I planting trees at this location?

Study your site carefully to determine what will enhance it. Are you trying to screen an unsightly view; add a splash of color at the community's main entrance; or simply want to shade a city street? Envision not just the immediate benefits, but what impacts the trees will have in the future. If your proposed site is public property (park, street right-of-way, school grounds) the property

owner **and** grounds manager should be involved in this entire process from step one. Many planting projects have failed because this important interaction didn't occur. In most instances, these individuals will have vital input and be as enthusiastic about the project as you are.

How much space do I need to plant trees?

This is where most well-intentioned projects go wrong. Planting trees underneath power lines, too close to buildings, next to street or commercial signs, or on top of sewer lines costs all of us millions of dollars every year. Be sure you know the average height and width dimensions of the trees you select before you plant (see Suggested Reading on page 16) **and** without exception, make sure all underground and overhead obstructions are identified before you decide where to plant. Most utility companies will be happy to provide information on this topic. And, in Missouri, one phone number will take care of identifying the locations of all underground utilities: 1-800 DIG-RITE (344-7483).

I know trees need water, but how can I get them what they need?

Don't plan on giving Mother Nature full responsibility for watering the trees. She lends a hand now and then, but most often not nearly enough for the first few years of a tree's life. You must designate a representative who will provide the proper amount for the tree's survival. If you cannot ensure this, then your planting plans should end here...period. A convenient water source may be a small pond, fire hydrant, access to a water truck from a public agency, or the permission of neighbors for use of their spigot. For information on how to water, read on.

What other details about the planting site do I need to investigate?

Soils and drainage: Soils are probably the most often ignored factor in the site selection process. Because soils in developed areas have been disturbed, they often can be poor for planting. The heavy clay soils commonly found in Missouri drain poorly. Clays compact easily especially with pedestrian traffic or the simple use of riding lawn mowers. Dig a few holes around your proposed planting site to check on soil type. While adding compost or other soils amendments is helpful for flower beds it is not feasible for tree planting. Consider seeking assistance from your local soil and water conservation district.

Sunlight: There is a definite correlation between the amount of direct sunlight at a site and the species that can tolerate it. For instance, if your site is in full sunlight, then a flowering dogwood or other species used to growing in some shade probably won't perform well. Conversely, there are many species of trees that cannot tolerate shade. Most evergreens must be planted in full sunlight. Don't forget to consider reflected light from various surfaces such as sidewalks, streets, and buildings.

Pollutants: Major metropolitan areas are not the only locations where trees are affected by chemicals and pollutants. Even the smallest communities apply de-icers to streets and sidewalks during the winter. Tree growth is adversely affected by a buildup of salt in the soil as well as airborne chemicals and particulates. Identify any possible pollutant sources that might affect your planting site. If even pollution-resistant species would fare poorly, you may need to consider another site.

Human activities: Simply put, humans most often cause decline and death of community trees. Envision the possible uses of the site and how planting trees will impact those uses. Obviously, this can be extremely difficult as our priorities on tree planting may not match up with someone else's use for the site. Do your best to work beforehand with all involved parties in recognizing the issues. You'll find far more support — and success — for your tree planting projects.

Environmental factors: Be sure you have good information about your planting location such as your area's hardiness zone or common pests. Hardiness zones provide information on the average maximum and minimum temperatures your area will endure. This will help you narrow down your list of appropriate species. (Make sure your information is specific to Missouri.)

We've given you lots to consider. But there's even more...

The Kansas City Story

Just as Kansas City residents were putting out pumpkins for Halloween a few years ago, it hit. The October snowstorm took a tremendous toll on the community's trees.

Many trees had not yet lost their leaves. Snow coated those leaves, making the load so heavy that branches broke, limbs ripped apart and some trunks even toppled.

Among the trees particularly vulnerable were species that are unsuitable for Missouri weather, and those that had not been properly maintained.

"In areas where there were more brittle species, poorly formed trees or trees that had been topped recently, those trees showed a very big problem with the snow. Neighborhoods that had streets lined with sweetgums, for instance, were devastated," says Jerry Monterastelli, an urban forester with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

The storm was a cold wake-up call from Mother Nature on the importance of selecting the right kind of tree for planting, and taking good care of it once in the ground.

Species Selection: What Will You Plant?

A tree's ability to thrive in Missouri's climate is one factor to consider in choosing a tree, but there are many others. One of the best ways to select the species to fit your site is to create your

ideal list of trees using a tree reference guide. List those species that appeal to you under three categories: shade trees, ornamentals, and evergreens. Make sure your list is lengthy. Don't limit yourself with the notion that there is only one "perfect" species for you to choose. Some suggested references are listed on page 16.

Next, run each species through the following series of questions to see how each tree fits your project goals. You'll "weed out" some of your selections for one reason or another as they don't suit your priorities for the planting site. Again, don't pare your list down to just one selection. Diversity is the key to a successful planting. Before making final decisions, talk to a professional to learn more about species. Some of the many available resources are an arborist, the staff at your local garden center, Forest ReLeaf of Missouri or a forester with the Missouri Department of Conservation.

How will this tree look when it's fully grown?

Like people, trees come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Combine the mature shape — columnar, vase-shaped, conical, globe-shaped, broad spreading or oval, to name a few — with its ultimate size, and you'll choose a tree that can enhance your landscape. For instance, you might select a small spreading tree under a power line or a narrow, tall tree between two buildings. Remember to consider a tree's mature shape and height, not the way it looks when young.

What does this tree look like?

Seasonal color: Consider designing your planting for year-round effect. Fall color can be very visually pleasing. People will drive for miles to see a spectacular display of sugar maples. However, there are other visual characteristics besides foliage. Look at the peeling bark of a river birch or a shagbark hickory and note the texture. Imagine the stark red fruit of a Washington hawthorn against a snowy winter landscape.

Flowers or fruits: All trees bear flowers and fruit. Consider their impact, positive or negative. For instance, mass plantings of flowering ornamental species like dogwood, redbud, or hawthorn can attract tourism. Flowering dogwoods abound in Camdenton where the whole community celebrates the start of spring — and the arrival of dogwood blossoms — with a festival. However, some species, while attractive, can detract from aesthetics or pose a safety issue, such as dropping seeds or fruit to create a slippery walkway. Practicality must prevail.

I want quick shade. How fast does this tree grow?

This is often an overrated factor in species selection. Everyone wants instant mature growth and the ability to immediately enjoy the fruits of their labor. We're here to tell you it's worthwhile to be patient. Most fast growing species are weak-wooded (silver maple is a great example) and have relatively short life spans. If quick shade is a must, be sure to mix slower growing and more sturdy species so the shade will last. It may take a little while longer for

the slower growers to catch up, but they will — and your community forest will be far better with them.

I hear this term “hardy” all the time.

What does it mean, exactly?

Hardiness is a tree's ability to survive in the normal range of temperatures of a specific geographic region. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has maps that show hardiness zones based upon average annual minimum temperature. According to the USDA map, Missouri ranges from zone 5 in the north to zone 6b along the Missouri-Arkansas border. Trees that are hardy only to zone 7 will not be very successful in Missouri. Most tree books list where each species is hardy. Check to make sure your selections will do well in your area.

I want to plant a problem-free species. Are there any?

There is no such thing as a problem-free tree. Every tree can be susceptible to a particular insect or disease problem. Native species — those that naturally grow in Missouri's forests — are typically more resistant to pests and severe climatic conditions. Research the issues commonly related to your possible tree selections through tree reference guides and professionals.

Every tree has its disadvantages. The Bradford pear and the silver maple grow quickly but are prone to breakage from wind or ice. Crabapples are lovely but very maintenance intensive. Goldenraintree has ornamental summer flowers and fruit but can spread beyond its desired location. The sweetgum has brilliant fall color but produces seed balls that can make walking in the vicinity hazardous. **Make sure you're aware of these issues as they relate to your site.**

Planning Your Planting: A Special Event

After selecting site and species, you will need to plan the planting logistics. Gathering project support, raising money and volunteers, promoting your event, and identifying project needs takes as much planning as selecting the right species for the right site. *(To assist you, these topics are fully explored in Forest ReLeaf's guides to community tree planting as a special event and fundraising.)*

Purchasing and Inspecting Your Trees

To give your planting the best chance for success, you should obtain the best product to fit your needs. Take heart. There are a wide variety of choices available for you in purchasing your planting stock. Purchase your plants from a reputable nursery. Nurseries that are members of the American Association of Nurserymen or the Missouri Association of Nurserymen come highly recommended.

Take your list of desired trees to a nursery or garden center to see what is available. Describe the planting site or ask a representative to visit the site with you. A willing professional might be able to offer alternatives you had not considered.

A word of advice: Don't get caught in the size game. Most people want the biggest plant they can possibly afford. While the desire is understandable, larger plants are much more expensive and difficult to handle. More importantly, the larger the tree, the larger the shock to its root system when dug, resulting in much poorer survival rates or poor plant vigor until adequate roots are regenerated. A plant under stress is much more susceptible to attack by insects and disease. You'll also find that your choice of species becomes more limited as you increase tree size. Some plants are more difficult to transplant than others, especially above 1½"-2" in caliper (trunk diameter).

Forest ReLeaf considers trees in the range of 1½"-2" caliper the best of both worlds. Species availability is good, transplant shock is reduced, the plant usually can be handled by two people, and it provides immediate effect. All growth factors being equal, a 1½"-2" caliper tree will typically attain mature size faster than trees transplanted at 3" caliper and greater.

If you must plant large trees, consider the following:

- Absolutely pledge to do post-planting maintenance. A tree transplanted at a smaller size will tend to overcome transplant shock more quickly and be more “forgiving” if an occasional watering day is missed.
- Set a maximum size limit of 2½"-3" caliper (diameter). This will give you a lot in the way of immediate effect, provide you with a fair plant selection, and keep transplant losses manageable.
- Plant only as many large trees as absolutely necessary. Use smaller plant material to “fill in” where immediate effect is not as important.

Be wary of places that want to sell plants only because they are in stock. It's best to move on rather than purchase an alternative you're not comfortable with.

You'll want to visually inspect your planting stock before you buy it. Always reserve the right to not accept a tree that you feel has problems. Many nurseries will allow you to select a tree by tying a colored ribbon on it while it's still growing in the field.

As you inspect your plant material — whether growing in the field or on the sales lot — here are some things to look for:

Crown/Branches

- Well-balanced or near symmetrical shape
- Single, well-developed, central leader (main stem)
- Plump, healthy-looking buds

Max. height

Avg. height

Min. height

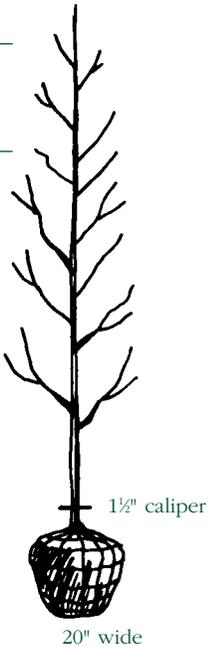


diagram A

Roots

- Branches well-distributed around and considerably smaller than the trunk
- Free of abnormality caused by insect, disease or physical defect.
- Word of caution: Avoid trees that have been “headed back,” the undesirable practice of pruning off the ends of the branches. While this causes the tree to “fill out,” it also prevents it from developing into its natural form.

Trunk

- Free of cuts or scrapes and all pruning wounds should be “healing” nicely
- Tapered, especially at the base.
- Straight
- Free of abnormality caused by insect or disease

Roots

- Adequate, healthy roots for the size of the plant. The American Standards for Nursery Stock suggest that the root ball (or container size) should be 12" in diameter for every 1" of trunk diameter. (*See diagram A*)
- Soil and roots joined tightly together

Trees sold at commercial nurseries are transplanted in three different ways: containerized (in a plastic, cardboard, or wood container), balled and burlapped (b&b), and bare root. How the roots are packaged has some influence on the size of the tree (at the time of purchase) as well as the handling and planting techniques.

Bare Root

Smaller trees are typically sold bare root, which means the soil around the roots is removed before packaging. The trees are stored in dormancy in cool, moist refrigerated rooms to prevent the root systems from drying. (*See diagram B*)

Trees sold in this manner are usually of smaller sizes ranging from seedlings (6" in height) to a 1" caliper (diameter) tree that may be as tall as 6'-8'.

What to look for:

- Moist, fibrous roots
- For deciduous seedlings up to 10" in height: roots approximately equal to the stem length; from 12"-24": roots approximately 10"-12" long.

Advantages

- Generally cost less than container and b&b trees
- Typically less transplant shock and better survival rates

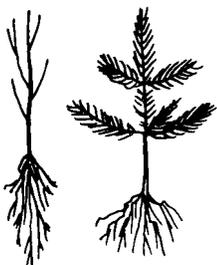


diagram B

Bare Root Seedlings

Disadvantages

- Careful storage is mandatory to prevent root drying
- Longer term storage (over 1 week) dramatically increases the risk of plant death
- Planting must be completed before the tree's dormancy ends
- Lack of availability of larger sized bare root stock

Containerized Stock

Containerized (or potted stock) is increasing in popularity as techniques improve for growing this type of plant. Typically the tree is grown in a container from its emergence from the seed. As the plant increases in size, it is moved into incrementally larger-sized containers. Traditional containers are made from black plastic. You may find variations, such as biodegradable cardboard or burlap (or other fabric) bags. (*See diagram C*)

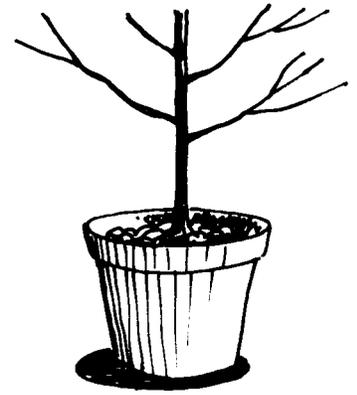


diagram C
Containerized Stock

What to look for

- Firmly attached to soil while in the container
- A soil ball that remains mostly intact when removed from the container
- A healthy root system that is not container rootbound. To determine this, gently remove the plant from its container and look for large roots that circle the inside of the pot. Do not purchase a plant that has roots wider than a pencil thickness encircling the container's interior.

Advantages

- Can be planted beyond plant dormancy with a better chance of survival
- Easy to handle and store
- Better long-term storage; requires less maintenance than bare root or b&b
- Wide availability of sizes
- The best survival rates of all types (if planted correctly)
- Plastic containers can be returned to the nursery or recycled

Disadvantages

- Root circling (girdling) with trees left in containers too long
- Increased planting time because containerized plants should be root pruned before planting
- Soil mixes in containers can be “too rich” and discourage roots from spreading into the surrounding soil. (Can be prevented with good planting techniques.)
- Dark-colored containers can heat up in sunlight and kill small absorptive roots

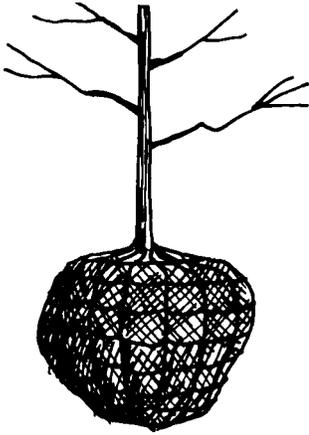


diagram D
Balled and
Burlapped (B&B)

Balled and Burlapped

Most landscape size trees are sold in this manner. The trees are harvested from a nursery field by machine or by hand. Improved methods in developing root systems are increasing the amount of roots remaining in the root ball after harvest. (See *diagram D*)

What to look for

- A recently harvested tree, preferably not stored over summer or winter
- Roots not loose from the soil ball (the trunk should not appear loose from the soil)
- Natural burlap fabric rather than synthetic plastic burlap
- Burlap that is not torn, loose or otherwise damaged
- A wire “basket” around the burlap root ball to lessen damage from handling

Advantages

- Easier transplantation of large size trees
- Good transplantation success rate
- Widely available and easy to find

Disadvantages

- Much of the root system is lost or damaged during the harvesting and transplanting process
- Root balls can be heavy and difficult to handle without proper equipment
- Controversy surrounding wire baskets as to whether roots are girdled by the wire before decomposition

It is best to have unbiased expert advice as you select your planting stock. Check with the Missouri Department of Conservation, local extension service, or a forestry (or horticultural) consultant.

Handling Trees

The slogan “Handle With Care” commonly seen on shipping boxes should be stamped on trees. Poor handling is one of the leading factors in the death of newly transplanted trees.

Bare root seedlings are the easiest to handle, provided the root systems are not allowed to dry out in any way. Containerized plants are also fairly easy, as long as the plant is picked up by the container. Never pick up the plant by the trunk, no matter how much easier it seems. B&b trees are by far the most difficult to handle. The average weight of an 8' to 10' balled and burlapped tree is 130 pounds! Because most of the weight is in the bulky root ball, the tree should always be carried by the root ball.

Under no circumstances should the tree be carried by the trunk! This very common mistake often results in the death of the

tree as the roots are literally torn away. Tell your supplier that you will reject any plants that are handled improperly and impress upon your volunteers the importance of careful handling. (See *diagram E*)

It's best to get assistance in handling b&b trees. You may be able to have the supplier place the plants next to their planting location or gain the use of a front end loader and operator from a municipal street or parks department. If these are unavailable, rent a dolly or ball cart, which is a specialized dolly made for carrying b&b trees.

Storing Trees

Avoid storage if at all possible. Try to plant the trees as soon as you receive them. Trees that are freshly transplanted from the nursery to the growing site have a much better chance of survival than those that are stored for any length of time. Although it can be difficult due to weather conditions, plan your planting event as close to the date of delivery as you can.

If storage is inevitable, use an organic mulch to thoroughly cover b&b and containerized trees. Bare root trees can be stored in a refrigerator. Never store in a freezer! Check the root system often and keep the roots moist.

Planting

The \$50 tree in the \$5000 hole

We're finally ready to dig a hole! It may seem the least technical part of the planting process, but a poor planting job can spell disaster no matter how much effort you've gone through.

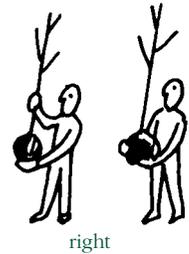
First, make sure you have the proper tools for the job. A good "round point" spade or shovel works best. You may want to have "sharpshooter spades" or picks on hand for difficult soils. For large scale planting projects, consider having the holes dug by a tractor-mounted auger.

It is important to dig wide holes, whether your trees are bare root, containerized or b&b. The width of the hole should be at least three times the diameter of the root spread (if bare root) or root ball. Not only does this encourage rapid root growth beyond the root ball, it eases soil compaction and allows for thorough backfilling of the hole. Intimate contact between the soil and the roots is vital for the tree's survival. (See *diagram F*)

The depth of the planting hole will depend on the drainage of the soil. However, the depth should never be greater than what is needed to provide a thin ($\frac{1}{8}$ ") layer of soil over the root ball. In most community parks or similar planting areas, soils are compacted and drain poorly. It is best to dig a more shallow hole and leave the root ball at a slight elevation above the surrounding soil. The back fill can be mounded slightly to prevent the planting hole from becoming a bath tub. In this case, it is vital that the tree



wrong



right

diagram E
Handling Trees

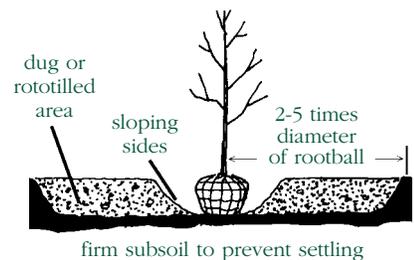


diagram F
Planting

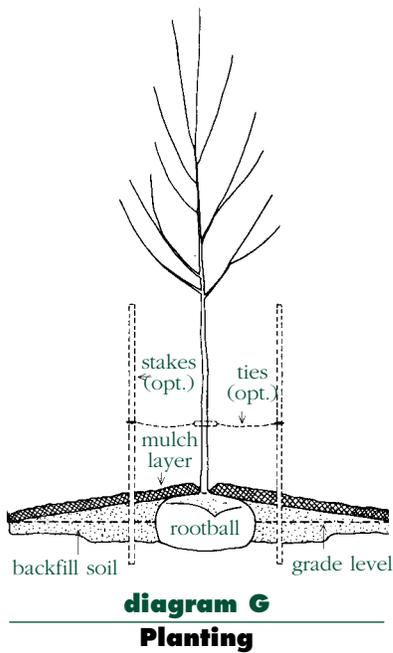


diagram G
Planting

be adequately mulched immediately after planting to prevent the root ball from drying. Trees should be placed in the hole and, if necessary, adjusted to prevent leaning. (See *diagram G*)

Bare Root Trees: Considered the easiest to plant. However, it is also easy to do a poor job in the process.

Container Trees: Any non-biodegradable container should be removed prior to planting. The root ball should then be slashed with a sharp knife to prevent girdling roots from forming. Larger circling roots can be cut with a pruners. Cardboard containers should be slashed with a sharp knife to encourage immediate root growth beyond the root ball.

B&B: Do not remove the natural burlap. Doing so injures the root system as soil collapses around it. Once the tree is properly positioned in the hole, unwrap or (untie) the burlap from around the trunk and peel back the top so that the soil is exposed. You may have to remove pinning nails from the burlap in order to peel back the burlap as well. Cut all strings or ropes — organic or synthetic — immediately. Although organic rope decays, this probably will not happen before the tree begins to increase in girth. Don't strangle the tree!

Backfilling

It is best to backfill with the same soil that came from the hole. Adding soil amendments can discourage roots from spreading into the surrounding soil and eventually strangle the tree. If the soil is so poor that you feel soil amendments are necessary, move the tree to another location.

Never stomp or tamp the backfill to firm it. Doing so compacts the soil. To remove large air pockets, back fill about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the hole and then water the soil thoroughly. You'll notice considerable settling as the water is absorbed. If you have enough soil, create a basin by building a small ring around the tree at the hole's edge to collect water and let it slowly soak into the soil.

(See *diagram H*)

Watering and Mulching

Watering is the single most important factor in minimizing transplant shock. Consider that as much as 95% of a root system is lost in a b&b tree. Whatever type of plant material chosen, the tree will be in shock, water absorption will be slow and availability is critical.

A slow, trickling hose is the best way to get water to a tree. Let the water soak in for 30 minutes then move the hose to make sure you have covered the entire planting area. If this is not feasible, two five-gallon buckets of water poured slowly into the basin you have created is adequate. Be careful not to overwater the tree. Too much water will kill a newly planted tree.

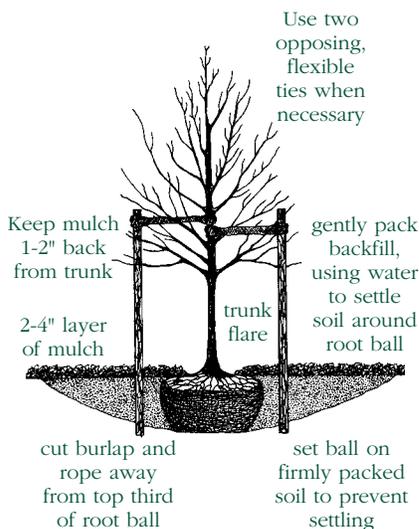


diagram H
Backfilling

Applying mulch at the time of planting will reduce competition from weeds or grass, retain soil moisture and moderate soil temperature. An organic mulch such as wood chips or leaf (needle) compost is best because it recreates the forest floor as it decomposes. Avoid using limestone rock and never pile mulch against the tree's trunk.

Staking and Fertilizing

It is best to avoid staking unless it is absolutely necessary. If your site is windy, in a high traffic area or where vandalism poses a problem, you may need to stake so that the tree's root system can establish itself into the surrounding soil. The most important thing to remember is that the stakes should be checked often and removed after one year. Many plantings have been devastated by a well-intentioned, but forgotten, staking job.

Fertilizing should be avoided until the tree is established. While the popular time frame is the second season after transplanting, the tree may still be under stress at this time. A soil test should be performed before fertilizing to determine the need and/or best type of fertilizer. Rely on a professional for assistance.

Maintenance, Maintenance, Maintenance: Have We Said Maintenance Yet?

The best planned planting event is doomed to failure if you don't have a specific design for maintenance. Far too many planting projects have failed from lack of maintenance. The key is to determine **well before** the planting event the responsibility for watering, weeding, mulching, pruning, staking or removal, fertilizing, and general health inspections.

Most public properties have grounds maintenance staff who would be willing to exchange maintenance responsibility for new trees. However, make sure everyone fully understands the length and scope of responsibility. A clearly defined "contract" between involved parties can minimize miscommunication on this critical issue. Never plant what cannot be maintained. Volunteer groups such as Master Gardeners, TreeKeepers (A Forest ReLeaf program), garden clubs, or service groups may be a source of assistance.

If you do not honestly believe the trees will be sufficiently cared for in those first critical years, consider another site or a different project. (Perhaps it would be more worthwhile to develop a program to assist your community with tree maintenance.)

Visit your planting often during the first few years. Invest some time in learning how trees grow and how they respond to stress. This will help you make decisions for future plantings.

This planning process may seem lengthy, but it assures the success of your project. Most importantly, never lose sight that your effort is a gift for future generations.

Success Stories

One good idea sparks another. Presented in the spirit of sparking more, here is a snapshot story from Missourians who recognize the value of their trees.

Public Properties

The Fair Grove School District serves more than 900 children who live north of Springfield. Its three educational centers sit on a 35-acre site that until 1993 had virtually no trees.

That was before Gene Kinslow, then a high school biology teacher, decided to launch a planting effort. Kinslow went beyond planning and funding to create a four-year maintenance program with school district maintenance staff.

“Take care of them — they’re going to grow,” Kinslow says. “If you don’t maintain after the planting, there’s a lot of effort for naught.”

Kinslow retired from the classroom in May 1996, but still regularly checks on the projects as a volunteer.

“You’ve got to have this champion for the trees,” he says. “In this case, it was me. It’s been just delightful to oversee everything. The campus is going to be a beautiful place.”

There are many public properties with a need for trees. Like Gene Kinslow, consider making a difference at one of them. Look for opportunities like screening the recycling center, shading a playground in a public park, greening a roadway or planting around a public building. You can provide your community with a gift for generations.

On Your Own Land

Dwight Dannen, a St. Joseph resident, collects trees the way some people collect stamps. During the 30 years he has lived in the middle of town, Dannen has planted more than 90 species of deciduous trees and almost 20 conifers on his six-acre lot.

Sometimes Dannen plants seedlings and transplants them after they’ve grown. Other times, he plants larger trees.

“It’s fun. I look through catalogues from all the nurseries and think, ‘where can I plant that one?’” he says. “I’ve always had an interest in trees. We moved into this house many years ago and we’ve been planting ever since. I’ll never quit.”

You don’t have to be as ambitious as Dwight Dannen to plant a tree in your yard. But, like him, you can find the activity highly enjoyable.

Planting a tree in your yard can be a wonderful family activity. It is the perfect way to celebrate a special occasion, such as a birth or an anniversary. And it is a great opportunity to



learn about different kinds of trees, their benefits, the need to choose the right tree for the right spot, and how to care for it after planting.

The Sky's the Limit

Dan Knox, director of veterinary services for St. Louis County, knows that managing and even visiting the two county-run animal shelters under his jurisdiction can be stressful.

“People coming to our facilities are often distraught,” he says. “They’ve lost a pet, or their animals are injured or ill. Sometimes they are having an animal euthanized.”

About 10 years ago, the animal shelters began planting trees as part of a larger beautification drive. The visual improvements are dramatic.

“The trees make the place appear more cheery and that helps people’s attitudes,” Knox says. “There’s nothing more uplifting than watching something growing, to see a tree coming in bloom. It’s a stress reliever for our employees.”

As a diversion from routine duties, Knox has employees water and care for the trees. Knox even started a small seedling nursery at the north shelter. “We’ve got some really nice trees coming along that we can transplant to our south facility,” he says.

Trees can work magic in a host of unlikely places.

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Checklist for Action

- Conduct an inventory of your community forest.
- Select your planting location with a critical eye.
- Choose the right tree for the right place.
- Inspect trees carefully before purchasing.
- Use proper planting procedures.
- Carry out a strong maintenance plan.
- Keep planting in your community!

Suggested Reading

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