

Texas Agricultural Extension Service



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Trees Need Our Help

Trees are often thought of as passive things in our environment that will always be there. But trees will not always be there, especially if they do not receive the care they need to thrive.

Trees not only provide beauty, color and a refreshing shade, they also improve the quality of our environment when cared-for and properly positioned.

- Trees improve air quality by filtering dust and other particles.
- Trees lower energy demands by shading living areas.
- Trees enhance landscapes.
- Trees provide screening for reducing noise.
- Trees provide psychological benefits.

In addition to these values, which are often difficult to measure, trees have an economic value. Several studies have shown that tree-covered residential building lots are more valuable than lots without trees.

The International Society of Arboriculture has derived a formula to calculate the



Healthy trees properly placed can enhance a landscape and provide shade.

value of individual trees, based on the size, species, condition and location of the tree. For instance, a live oak strategically placed in a landscape would be more valuable than one in a large group of trees. Short-lived trees, such as the willow, do not have the value of long-lived trees, such as the pecan tree.



Trees planted under power lines require extreme pruning as they mature.

Selecting Trees

When considering which tree to buy, make sure it will enhance your landscape. Trees that grow to a large size should not be planted in small spaces, nor under utility lines. The small tree you plant may grow rapidly and overfill its space within a few years.

Trees that will mature to a limited size and shape are available for small spaces. For more spacious lawns, some of the larger growing trees, such as pecan, may work well. And with a pecan tree, you will have nuts to enjoy, too.

Planting Trees

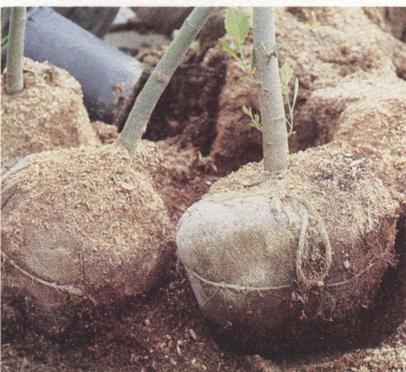
Most trees on the market are container-grown and can be planted any time of the year in most parts of Texas. Of course, extra attention is required if the tree is planted during summer.

Some trees are field-grown and then temporarily placed in containers. They usually need extra care to ensure their roots do not dry out.

Balled and burlapped trees (B&B) are dug and wrapped in burlap. They should be planted when the tree is dormant. Be careful when handling B&B trees to prevent breaking the ball of soil. After planting, adequately brace them until the roots



Container-grown trees are available year-round.



Balled and burlapped trees should be planted when dormant.

become firmly established (one to three years).

Bare-root trees must be planted during the dormant season.

In some areas, larger trees may be planted by contractors with tree "spades" or diggers. However, this method is more expensive.

Fertilizing Existing Trees

Established trees need fertilization to correct nutrient deficiencies. The nutrient most often deficient in older trees is nitrogen because it is readily leached from the soil. Symptoms of nitrogen deficiency are uniformly yellow leaves and short shoots. In conifers, the needles are yellow and short.

Iron deficiency is frequently seen. Usually there is enough iron in the soil, but it is unavailable to trees because of high soil pH. The primary symptom of iron deficiency is young leaves that are yellow with dark green veins; the older leaves may remain green. The leaves may also be smaller than normal.

To correct nutrient deficiencies, fertilize trees. Several fertilization methods are possible:

- foliar sprays
- broadcasting on soil
- placing in holes in soil
- soil injections
- trunk injections

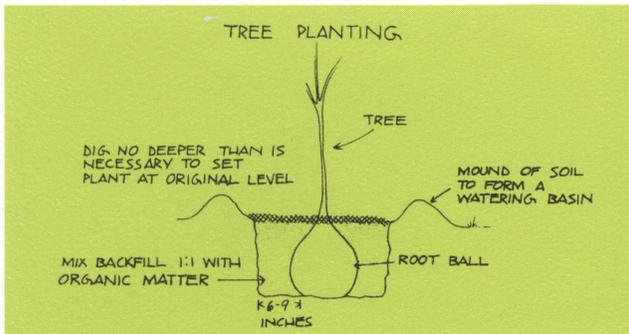
Foliar sprays can quickly eliminate some of the micro-nutrient deficiencies such as

Tips for Planting

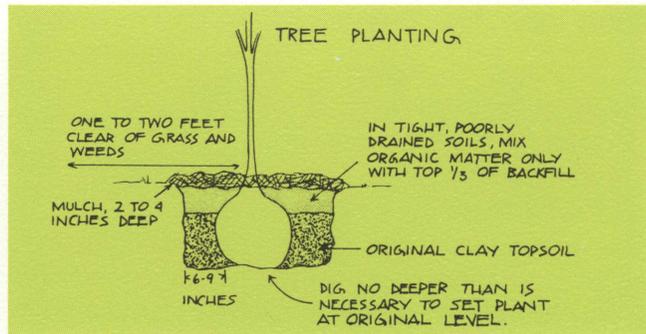
- Plant the tree at the same depth it was in the nursery.
- If you plant in a poorly drained area, make a small mound in which to plant the tree.
- Be sure to make the hole large enough for the tree.
- If the tree is container-grown, remove the container.
- For balled and burlapped trees, cut and loosen as much burlap as possible after placing the tree in the hole.
- Generally, refill the hole with the same soil as removed.
- Make a watering well around the tree to retain water the first and second year, particularly in a sandy or loamy soil.
- Trees taller than four feet may need to be staked. Use rubber hose to protect the tree from the staking wire.
- Water the tree immediately after planting and as needed during the first two growing seasons. A thorough soaking is better than light, frequent waterings.
- Do not fertilize the first year.



General yellow coloring of foliage results from nitrogen deficiency.



Planting in well-drained soils



Planting in poorly drained soils

iron, but this is often a short-term solution.

Because nitrogen moves readily in the soil, it can be broadcast on the surface. However, grass growing around a tree will utilize much of the nitrogen before it gets to the tree's roots.

Most soil-applied fertilizers should be used late in the dormant season so the fertilizer is available for spring growth.

The fertilization of most large trees is best left to professionals. They have equipment that can place the fertilizer in the root zone, and sprayers powerful enough to reach the tops of large trees. Some tree care companies offer trunk injection fertilizers.

Pruning Existing Trees

Perhaps the most visible care performed on trees is pruning branches. The impact is obvious immediately. Therefore, it is important that this be done properly, not only for the health of the tree, but also for aesthetics.

Most trees need pruning sometime during their lives. Smaller trees may be pruned

by homeowners, but larger trees should be professionally pruned by arborists, who are tree care professionals. Pruning large trees often requires special equipment such as heavy ropes, tree climbing equipment, and bucket trucks.

When pruning trees, do not prune any limbs that could come in contact with electrical wires. Tree limbs conduct electricity and will cause a fatal shock. If you have limbs near electrical wires, call your electrical utility representative. Company personnel or their contract crews have been trained to handle these situations.

Utility representatives or their contract arborists may contact you about pruning trees that interfere with wires. This can prevent an interruption



Wound dressing can crack and allow entry of insects and diseases.

in electrical service and potential injuries caused by limbs breaking during storms.

Avoid topping trees unless absolutely necessary. When pruning, selectively remove limbs from throughout the tree to create a symmetrical shape. Topped trees give the appearance of a "flat-top" haircut and are undesirable. Topping also opens the door for more damage by diseases and insects.

All deadwood around wounds where the dead branches originate from the trunk should be removed. Also remove any diseased limbs, crossing limbs or other undesirable limbs.

The need to use tree wound paint has been debated in recent years. Most experts agree that these dressings do little to promote the healing of wounds. Unless applied in a very thin coat, the dressing usually cracks or peels, allowing moisture and decay organisms to enter the wound. However, in some cases, wound dressings may prevent insects from boring into trees or from carrying disease-causing organisms to fresh wounds.

Fighting Insects & Diseases

Many insects and diseases cause trees to weaken and die. Examine your tree carefully on a periodic basis. Do not wait until the tree is nearly dead to correct insect and disease problems. If you think you have a problem, contact your county Extension agent. Agents often deal with these situations and know what problems are occurring in the area. Local arborists are also good sources of information.

Some insect and disease problems do not require treatment. Others require prompt attention. Arborists have the knowledge, equipment and pesticide training to deal with most of your insect and disease problems.

Getting Professional Help

Care of younger trees, such as transplanting and early pruning, can be done by the homeowner. However, some nurseries offer tree planting services that are guaranteed for a specific period when you purchase a tree from them. If planting in fall or winter, get a minimum six-month guarantee. Transplanting large trees, usually up to six inches in diameter, but nearly unlimited sizes in some cases, is available in many areas. Consult your local yellow pages under trees.

Many homeowners are reluctant to use fertilizers or protection chemicals, or if they have large trees, do not have the equipment necessary to apply them.

Professional arborists definitely prune and remove large trees better than amateurs. Working in the tops of large trees requires certain tools and months of training that the average homeowner does not have. Again, the phone book is a good source for locating tree care professionals.

When selecting an arborist, check to see if the company is a member of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) or the National Arborists Association (NAA). Membership in one or both of these organizations indicates the company is making an effort for the employees to stay current on the latest techniques of their profession. Ask the arborist to provide names of several of their recent clients that will endorse their work. Also, be sure you and the arborist both agree in writing on the work to be done. Use only insured arborists who are able to provide proof of insurance.

Trees do need care, not only when they are young but as they age. A properly cared-for tree can beautify your property for decades.

Keeping Trees Healthy

The trees in your yard are an asset to your home and property value. Often, they have tremendous sentimental value. You can keep these trees healthy by following the do's and don'ts of tree care.

Do:

- Plant the right species for your area
- Allow room for the tree to grow
- Water trees during drought
- Apply fertilizer as needed
- Remove dead branches
- Examine periodically for insects and diseases
- Prune when necessary

Don't:

- Place more than two inches of soil over the roots
- Scrape the soil around trees
- Change the drainage in an area
- Dig trenches for utilities near trees
- Compact the soil over the root system



National
Arborist
Association

Educational programs conducted by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.

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