



Horticulture

What Day is Arbor Day?

Arbor Day, the Tree Planter's Holiday, started more than a century ago in Nebraska, is still going strong today. In January 1872, J. Sterling Morton proposed to the State Board of Agriculture a tree planting holiday be observed in Nebraska on April 10, 1872. He proposed the holiday be named Arbor Day and its purpose, "to urge upon the people of the state the vital importance of tree planting." His efforts were successful and more than a million trees were planted in Nebraska on the first Arbor Day.

In 1885, Arbor Day became a legal holiday in Nebraska, to be observed on Morton's birthday, April 22. Since 1989, Nebraska has celebrated Arbor Day on the last Friday in April. Tree planting is as important now as it was to our grandparents. In fact, it is even more important now since many trees must be planted to keep up with the loss of trees and forests to land clearing, fire and urban development. By replacing these trees, we can be sure we will always have forests and trees for our future. Trees provide shelter from the wind and sun, wood products, wildlife habitat and more pleasurable surroundings for recreational activities. Many rural families

have always planted trees each year around their ranch or farm to protect soil, livestock and family.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Arbor Day is its emphasis on the future. In the words of J. Sterling Morton, "Other holidays repose on the past. Arbor Day proposes for the future." We learn to plant trees to show our hope for the future and our concern for those who will come after us.

Why is Arbor Day so important to Nebraskans? Certainly the holiday's origin in our state contributes to our enthusiasm. But even more important is the scarcity of trees and forests in Nebraska. We appreciate trees because we can easily see what life would be like without them.

Nebraskans should be proud of their tree planting heritage. We can feel satisfied in knowing this state is a more beautiful place to live and a better place for the future.

To celebrate Arbor Day this year, consider planting a tree in your yard, neighborhood, school yard, local park or city square. To find out more about Arbor Day, visit this web site at www.arborday.org (MJF)

Properly planted and cared for trees add beauty and value to almost any property, whether they are planted in a park, in front of your house, or along a street or highway.

Selecting Planting Location

Selecting planting locations is one of the most critical decisions made during the planting process. If the plant must eventually be removed because the site is unsuitable, then the planting was a failure.

To avoid failure, consider overhead and underground utilities, future construction sites and the mature size of the plant. Trees often have to be removed because they have grown too large for the site. Large landscape-sized trees should be planted a minimum of 15 to 20 feet away from buildings or other obstructions. Overhead and underground utilities must be considered in order to avoid potential conflicts. Large trees should be planted a minimum of 20 to 25 feet from overhead power lines.

When selecting your planting location, consider the plant's requirements for growth and survival, such as exposure to sunlight and soil drainage needs.

Selecting the Tree

Once you have selected the species that will perform the desired function in your landscape, visit a reliable nursery in your local area who will guarantee its plant material. Consider the size and height of the tree when you are selecting your plant. Smaller trees will establish better than larger trees. If the tree is too large, it may go into transplant shock and never fully recover.

When to Grow

Container-grown stock may be planted during most of the year except when soils are frozen and during the extreme heat of summer. The best time for planting container-grown stock is in the spring between March 15 and May 30 if weather and soil conditions permit. Fall planting should be done between Sept. 1 and Oct. 30. All plant material should be planted as soon as possible after receipt. There is no advantage from storing landscape plants.

Digging

The planting site should be dug two to three times wider than the root system of the tree to be planted. The finished hole should be narrower at the bottom than at the top and be at

Planning to Plant a Tree? Read This First!



PHOTO/Keith Weller of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

least two feet wider than the root mass. With heavy or hard soils, the sides of the planting hole should be loosened to facilitate root penetration into the adjacent soil.

Plant the tree back at the same depth it was originally grown. Make sure all the roots are covered with soil, but do not plant too deep. Soil should not be up around the trunk.

The soil used for backfill should be neither too wet nor too dry and all large stones or clods should be removed. Backfill with the existing soil. Do not use soil amendments.

Remove all labels and wires to prevent girdling.

Staking and Guying

The purpose of most staking and guying is to prevent a newly planted tree from tipping over in the wind. Excessive movement can dislodge the small, fibrous roots from their new footing in the soil before they are firmly established. However, many trees are lost because guying materials are not removed or are improperly installed.

If at all possible, staking and guying systems should not be used. If plants are staked and guyed, the material used should have a broad surface at the point of contact with the tree to prevent damage from rubbing. Supports should allow for some free movement of the plant. Do not use wire and hose.

To prevent girdling, remove all guying material at the end of the first growing season.

Wrapping

Tree wrap should not be used on newly planted trees. Tree wraps may not always protect trunks from damage and, in fact, can cause, hide and increase problems. In addition, tree wrap covers the photosynthetic tissues of the trunk, preventing the production of food that is needed by the young tree.

Tree wraps should be used during the time that the tree is being transported and needs protection from mechanical damage.

Some wraps are claimed to protect trees against insect damage. However, borer activity under wraps and guards is frequently reported, and research has shown that insect and disease problems can sometimes be even worse on trees that are wrapped. Often the tree wrap causes the bark to remain moist, even in dry weather. Bark and cambial tissue may be seriously damaged or killed when too much water is held against the trunk. This problem is compounded when wraps at the base of the trunk are covered with several inches of mulch.

Watering

Water is critical to the success of any tree planting. Tree roots, especially the small, water absorbing roots, are easily damaged during transplanting. For sufficient water uptake to occur, the root ball of a newly planted tree must be kept moist, but not saturated. Monitor the moisture in the root ball daily, and water as needed so that the root ball does not dry out.

The area outside of the root ball also should be watered to encourage root growth into the surrounding soil.

Avoid overwatering, which is a major cause of tree failure in many Nebraska communities. Heavy clay soils that have been compacted during construction activities severely restrict the movement of water and commonly lead to saturated conditions.

Mulching

Mulching is the most important post-planting practice that you can do to improve the health and vigor of your landscape plant. Studies have shown that wood chip mulch can nearly double plant growth in the first few years after planting. Mulching conserves moisture, reduces weed competition, and insulates roots from temperature extremes.

Mulch with a two to three inch layer of organic material. The minimum diameter of the mulched area should be two feet.

see *PLANTING A TREE* on p. 11

Garden Guide

Things to do this month

Consider planting flowers which may be dried for winter arrangements. Some of the best are strawflower, statice, celosia and globe amaranth.

Do not buy plants in bloom. Annual flowers, such as Petunias, that are blooming in the pack, are often rootbound or overgrown. Plants without blossoms will bloom and grow better.

Scatter annual poppy seeds in flower borders. The fine seeds need no covering. The plants grow rapidly and provide colorful flowers in early summer.

In a sunny location with poor soil, plant nasturtiums for a colorful show. They require warm soil to sprout and start blooming in about 50 days. Too much water and fertilizer produces excess leaves and few flowers.

When chrysanthemums show signs of life, dig up and divide large plants. Discard woody portions and replant divisions 12 to 15 inches apart.

Cut flower stalks back to the ground on daffodils, hyacinths and other spring flowering bulbs as the flowers fade. Do not cut the foliage until it dies naturally. The leaves are necessary to produce strong bulbs capable of reflowering next year.

Do not add organic matter to the soil when planting trees. It does not help the plant become established and it may create conditions that encourage the roots to stay inside the planting hole instead of spreading to surrounding soil. Do dig a large planting hole, but fill it with the original soil removed from it.

The last Friday in April is National Arbor Day. Plant a tree, or support an organization which does.

Prune spring blooming shrubs such as forsythia and spirea after they have finished flowering.

Remove sticks, rocks and other debris from your lawn to prevent damaging your lawnmower or injuring yourself when mowing. Check your lawnmower and other lawn care equipment in preparation for the coming season.

Put a birdhouse in the garden to attract insect eating friends.

Measure the rainfall with a rain gauge posted near the garden so you can tell when to water. The garden needs about one inch of rain per week from April to September. (MJF)

Easter Lily Care

If you have an Easter lily do not throw it away after it is done blooming. You can save the bulb and plant it outdoors. Easter lilies can be replanted outside after the blooms are gone.

Plant the Easter lily outdoors as soon as the ground can be worked. Select a sunny site with well-drained soil. Set the top of the bulb six inches below the soil surface. Do not remove the flower stalk until it dries, then cut it off at the soil surface. After the soil surface freezes in the fall, mulch the soil and do not remove the mulch until new growth begins in the spring. (MJF)