

## Ten Rules for Planting Trees

Tree planting is an ancient art, but the methods have changed over time to reflect the latest and best arboricultural and forestry research. It is vitally important to remember where trees live in nature. In the natural forest there are no sidewalks, automatic sprinklers, streets, parking lots, tall buildings or other man-made objects.

These guidelines are the most current practices recommended for proper tree planting. It is tough being a tree in Nebraska, but following these procedures will provide a planted tree the best means of surviving and growing to maturity.

**1. Selection is important.** Select the right tree for the right place—many serious problems can be avoided by proper selection decisions.

**2. Pre-planting care.** Keep planting stock in shaded location and well-watered. Do not get rough with the planting ball or container. If you have to hold a plant over, make sure it is moist and shaded. When shipping trees it is important to have them covered to avoid heavy loss of water through transpiration. Keep in mind when trees are transplanted from the nursery 90 to 95 percent of the root system is left behind.

**3. On-site and prior to planting remove all wires, labels, cords and**

**anything else** attached to the plant.

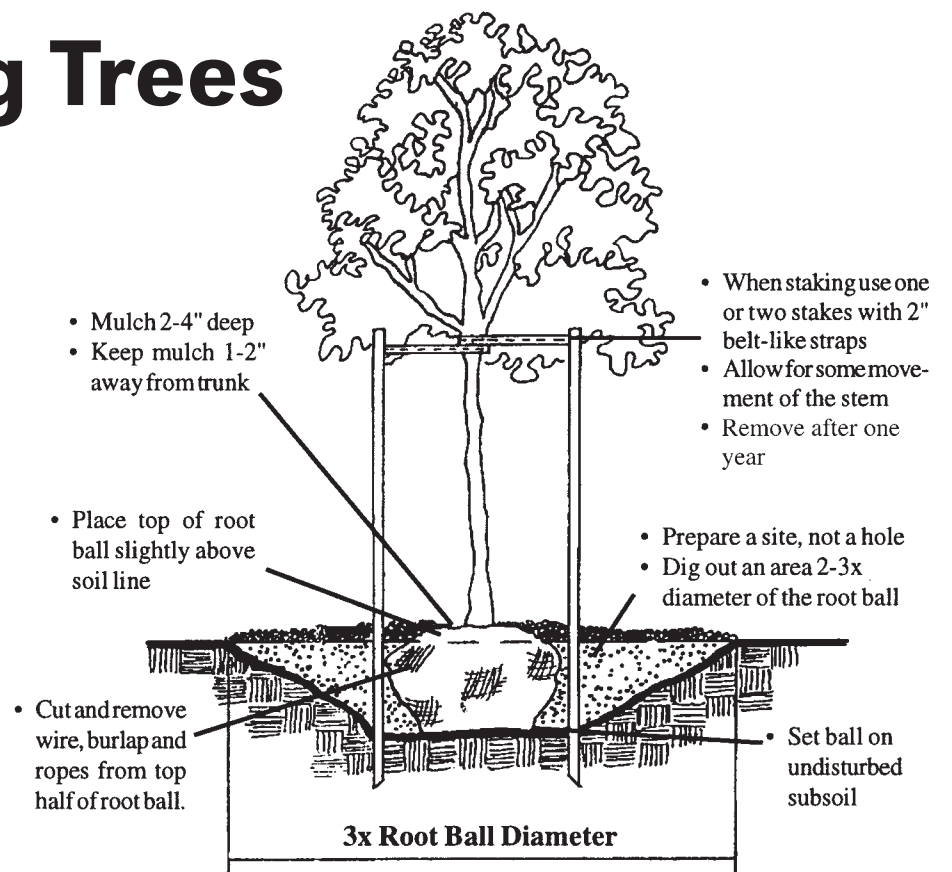
**4. Hole size and shape have become a very important factor.** Do not skimp on the width of the planting hole. Plant slightly above nursery level. Place the plant on solid ground—not fill dirt. Be careful of drainage. One sure way to check is to fill the hole with water and come back in 24 hours. If the water has not drained out, make alternate plans.

**5. Remove ALL containers from the root ball prior to planting**—even peat pots should not be left intact. Wire baskets and burlap should be rolled back into the hole at least 12 inches below planting depth after the tree has been set into the hole. It is best if wire baskets can be removed completely.

**6. Backfill with loosened soil.** Research shows amendments are not necessary. When dealing with difficult sites some judgments may have to be made.

**7. No need to fertilize at planting time.** Remove only damaged or rubbing branches. Food production by the leaves is vitally important. Cutting back restricts leaf area and therefore food production.

**8. Water the plant thoroughly then two to three times per week** for the first season.



**9. Mulch around the tree.** This is important!! Natural composted mulch is best. Do not use plastic sheeting. Two to four inches of mulch is ideal. Critters will infest mulch levels any deeper. Mulch should cover the ground to the drip line, if possible, and should not be placed against the trunk.

**10. Stake only when necessary.** If the tree is staked, allow for some movement but take care not to injure the bark. Staking is useful more for protection against people. Remove stakes after one year.

Source: Nebraska Forest Service Community Forestry Program

## Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH  
By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

Fall is a good time for improving your garden soil. Add manure, compost and leaves to increase the organic matter content.

Plant peonies now, but make sure the crowns are buried only one and a half to two inches below ground level. Planting them deeper than two inches may keep them from blooming.

Root cuttings from annual bedding plants such as begonias, coleus, geraniums and impatiens. These plants can be overwintered in a sunny window and provide plants for next year's garden.

Pot up chives, parsley and other herbs to extend the growing season in the house.

Pears should be picked at the hard ripe stage and allowed to finish ripening off the tree. The base color of yellow pears should change from green to yellow as the fruit approaches maturity.

Be sure to keep strawberry beds weed free. Every weed you pull now will help make weeding much easier next spring.

Do not wait for frost warnings to move your plants indoors. Temperatures of 45 degrees Fahrenheit or lower can damage many tropical house plants.

Collect okra seed pods, gourds, sumac seed heads, rose hips and other suitable materials for dried arrangements. Air dry these materials in a dark, cool location.

Before the first frost dig up caladiums. Allow them to dry and store them in a dry place for the winter.

Perennial phlox can be divided about every third or fourth year. Divide big clumps of perennial phlox into thirds. Early fall or early spring are the best times to plant or transplant them.

Divide lily-of-the-valley.

Select accent plants for your landscape that will provide autumn colors. Trees that have red fall color are flowering dogwood, red maple, sugar maple, Norway maple, red oak and scarlet oak. Shrubs with red fall foliage include sumac, viburnum, winged euonymus and barberry.

Allow plants to finish the summer growth cycle in a normal manner. Never encourage growth with heavy applications of fertilizer or excessive pruning at this time. Plants will delay their dormancy process that has already begun in anticipation of winter in the months ahead. New growth can be injured by an early freeze.

Tree wound paints used after pruning are no longer recommended as they can slow healing and may promote decay.

If pesky seedlings of woody plants, such as elm, mulberry, hackberry or maple are found growing in your yard, remove them as soon as possible. If left to long they will take over gardens and other landscape plantings.

Rake up leaves, twigs and fruit from crabapple trees and dispose of them in the trash to help control apple scab disease.

Water newly planted trees and shrubs to provide sufficient moisture and prevent winter damage. Add a two inch layer of a organic mulch such as shredded bark around the base of plants to retain soil moisture and regulate soil temperature.

Wood ashes contain phosphorous, potassium and calcium. It can be placed on vegetable gardens and flower beds.

Hot peppers will keep best if stored after they are dry. Thread the peppers on a string to dry. Hang in a cool, dry place.

## Answers to Composting Questions

Mary Jane Frogge  
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**What kinds of materials can be composted?** Yard and garden residues and other organic materials are suitable for composting. This includes leaves, grass clippings, straw, hay, sawdust and finely chopped or shredded tree and shrub prunings.

**Can kitchen scraps be added to a compost pile?** Certain kitchen scraps can be added to the compost pile, such as fruit and vegetable trimmings, coffee grounds and eggshells. Bury them in the pile to prevent odors and flies. Do not add meat scraps, bones, grease, whole eggs or dairy products to the compost pile because they are slow to decompose, will cause odors and can attract rodents.

**What is the optimum size for a compost pile?** The best size of an enclosed compost pile is between a 3 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft.. If any smaller, it will dry out too fast; any larger and there will be poor air move-

ment and it will be difficult to turn the pile.

**How can I avoid problems with unpleasant odors from the compost pile?**

Odors may arise either from the addition of excessive amounts of wet plant materials like fruits or grass clippings, from overwatering the pile or by not turning



Yard and garden residues (left) can be composted into finished compost (right).

an actively decomposing pile periodically. A properly prepared and adequately turned compost heap will generate little if any objectionable odor. Good aeration, provided by regularly turning over the materials in the pile, is essential for good, rapid decomposition. Also, keeping the compost damp but not waterlogged will go a long way toward preventing unpleasant odors.

**How long does it take to reach a finished product?** Generally, a compost pile containing a good mixture of finely chopped materials, is turned regularly and kept moist, will be ready in about two to four months. A pile or bin left unattended and material not shredded may take a year or longer to decompose.

Piles prepared in the late fall will not be very well decomposed by the spring. When the compost is finished, the pile will be about half its original size and have a pleasant, earthy smell.

**Of what value or use is the finished compost product?**

Compost is used as an organic amendment to improve the physical, chemical and biological properties of the soils. For example, adding compost to garden soil will increase the moisture holding ability of sandy soils and improve the drainage and aeration of heavy clay soils. Over time, yearly additions of compost will create desirable soil structure making the soil easier to work.

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