

Thank You Master Gardeners!

Five Lancaster County Master Gardeners were recently awarded plaques to recognize them for their years of service to the Lancaster County Master Gardener program. We appreciate their dedication and support to University of Nebraska Extension programming in Lancaster County. Master Gardeners are given annual training by UNL personnel and in return provide 40 hours of volunteer time to educational outreach such as answering horticulture phone calls.



(Above, L-R)
Bertine Loop, 20 years;
Gladys Jeurink, 30 years;
and
LaVina Vagts, 25 years.



(Right, L-R)
Bob Gilmour, 20 years
and
Mary Gilmour-20 years.

Planning to Plant a Tree for Arbor Day? Read This First!

Mary Jane Frogge
UNL Extension Associate

Planting a tree for Arbor Day is a Nebraska tradition for many families. Here are some things to consider before purchasing and planting a new tree this year.

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 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.

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.

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. All plant material should be planted as soon as possible after receipt. There is no advantage from storing landscape plants.

Remove all labels and wires to prevent girdling.

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 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,



Mulching a newly planted tree with woodchips.

but do not plant to 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.

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.

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.

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 should be watered to encourage root growth into the surrounding soil. Avoid over watering, 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 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. Mulch with a two to three inch layer of organic material. The minimum diameter of the mulched area should be 2 feet. Do not place mulch directly against the stem of the plant. Proper mulching provides a well-groomed appearance and designates an area where grass or weeds are eliminated, which results in lower damage rates from mowers and weed trimmers. Mechanical damage is one of the leading causes of injury and death of landscape plants.

Most soils contain sufficient levels of available nutrients

to supply the requirements of newly planted landscape plants except where construction has either altered the soil or changed its composition. Fertilizer should not be applied during the first several growing seasons while the new roots are establishing themselves. After this period, determination of additional nutrient needs should be based upon the condition and vitality of the plants and analysis of soil samples.

Source: NebGuide Woody Landscape Plants

Garden Guide

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

By Mary Jane Frogge, UNL Extension Associate

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.

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 completed 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.

Seed bare spots in your fescue or bluegrass lawn.

Scatter annual poppy seeds in flower borders. The fine seeds need not be covered. 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.

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.

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

Do not restrict yourself to buying plants in bloom. Petunias that bloom in the pack are often rootbound or overgrown and after planting will actually be set back and cease to bloom for about a month. Plants without blossoms will actually bloom sooner and will grow better as well.

To extend the blooming period of gladiolus, plant early, middle and late-season selections each week until the middle of June. Choose a sunny location and plant the corms 4-6 inches deep and 6-8 inches apart.