10 Rules for Planting Trees

These guidelines are the most current practices that are recommended for proper tree planting. It is tough being a tree in Nebraska, but following these procedures will prolong the life of your trees in 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. Contact District Hotline before you dig your planting hole.

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 tree for a time, make sure it is moist and shaded. Keep in mind that when trees are transplanted from the field, 95 percent of the root system is left behind.

3. On site and prior to planting remove all wires, labels, cords and anything else that may be 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 dirt on solid ground, not fill dirt. Be careful of drainage.

5. Remove all containers from the root ball prior to planting, even peat pots should not be left intact. It is best if wire baskets can be removed completely.

6. Backfill with loosened soil. Research shows that soil amendments are not necessary.

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 or wood bark is best. Do not use the chipped variety. Do not place mulch within a four-inch area of mulch is ideal. Rodents may infest mulch if levels are 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 and lawn mowers. Remove stakes after the first season.

Mulch to the drip line if possible.

Clover Mites are Common Spring Invaders

Each spring, we receive reports of clover mite invasions. Clover mites are very small and can easily crawl in around windows and doors, especially on sides of homes where the mites have found the house. Clover mites are relatives of ticks and spiders. They are slightly smaller than a pin head and appear reddish-brown. They appear as brick-red specks crawling around windows, drapes, curtains and furniture.

Clover mites are harmless. They don’t bite or injure humans or pests. They can’t survive indoors. They come into our homes accidentally and once inside, will die. Outdoors, they feed on turfgrass and some plants, but rarely cause damage. Clover mites can be especially numerous on well-fertilized grass.

The best way to manage clover mites is to prevent their entry into buildings in the spring or early summer. Sealing around windows and doors may help reduce the number of mites coming indoors, but the mites are so tiny, they can squeeze through very small openings. If clover mite invasions are a recurring problem for you, remove grasses and weeds in a three-foot strip around foundations. The clover mites may still cross mulch or peat gravel to enter homes, but this will help.

Flowerbeds planted with zinnia, marigold, salvia, rose chrysanthemum and petunia or shrubs like barberry, juniper, spruce, arborvitae and yew make better barriers because these plants aren’t attractive to clover mites. If you choose to treat around your foundation, treat an area 5–10 feet out from the base of the foundation and up a few feet on the walls of the house. Many products registered for clover mite control are short-lived and you will need to re-treat. Make sure you follow all label directions carefully. Treat when daytime temperatures will be at least 60°F because chemical effectiveness may be reduced with cooler temperatures.

If clover mites have found their way into your home, the best control is your vacuum cleaner. Avoid crushing or smearing the mites because they will leave a red stain. Avoid “wiping” away the mites because they will smear and stain. You can dab them up with a damp paper towel.

Take special precautions if you have light colored carpet because each time you walk over to look at the clover mites, you may be crushing their bodies into your carpet and staining it. I remember one mom who called to report her young boys had found the clover mites near a window in their bedroom and had “painted” the walls with them. The stains left by crushed clover mites are very durable and can be hard to remove.

A Colorado State University entomologist suggests putting a fine layer of dust around windows, in cracks and other areas where clover mites may enter. You may want to give this technique a try. Use talc-containing baby powder, diatomaceous earth and even baking soda. The mites coated with the fine dust will die in the barrier.

Clover mites are so tiny they stick easily to almost any type of sticky tape. Place double-sided masking tape on window sills or other areas where clover mites may enter. You may want to give this technique a try. Use talc-containing baby powder, diatomaceous earth and even baking soda. The mites coated with the fine dust will die in the barrier.

Colored carpet because they have completed flowering. 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.

2015 Composting Demonstrations

Learn how to be successful with composting by attending a composting demonstration at one of three workshops sponsored by Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln Recycling Office.

Sessions are presented by Extension Master Gardeners. At each composting program, two lucky participants will win either a composting thermometer or a composting bin.

Composting Demonstrations are presented at the Pioneers Park Nature Center’s backyard composting demonstration area. You will see three types of composting bins and how to use them. Demonstrations will be held:

- Saturday, April 18, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. (presenters will stay longer than usual to answer questions)
- Saturday, May 16, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, June 20, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, Sept. 19, 10 a.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 17, 10 a.m.

Composting Workshop:

- Tuesday, April 14, 6:30–7:30 p.m. – Bess Dodson Loan Library, 6701 S. 14th St.