

April 8, 2010

**A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY
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Tree Transplanting Guidelines

For me winters seem to get longer each year but the sight of green grass has renewed my excitement for the outdoors. Judging from telephone calls received lately, others are experiencing similar energies and the strong desire to enjoy the beauty offered by our landscapes.

Regardless of where people live in this country, there is a high respect for trees. Besides beauty, shade and maybe food, trees offer many intangibles. For me, I think it is a sense of security.

This week I want to use my column space to share some thoughts about transplanting trees. Although some species may survive transplanting any time during the year when the ground is not frozen, the preferred times for moving trees is spring after the ground thaws and before buds on the tree or shrub begin to swell. My second choice is in the fall after leaf drop but before the ground freezes. Fall planting should take place soon after leaf drop. This will provide time for new water absorbing roots to develop before the soil freezes. Since evergreens are especially prone to winter browning, they should be moved late in the summer to early fall.

Trees and shrubs harvested in nurseries are often grown using special cultural practices, such as root pruning, to prepare them for eventual harvesting and transporting to the sales area. Field-grown nursery plants may have 75 % of their root system intact after they are dug, whereas trees and shrubs dug from the wild or established landscape plantings may only have 25 % or less of their root system intact.

There are plenty of do's and don'ts when transplanting. One of the most important is never allow plant roots to become dry during the transplanting process. Many years ago I witnessed a good-

will organization move several ten foot spruce trees donated to another organization by a farmer who lived 40 miles from the transplant site. These trees were dug-up with a backhoe and placed on the truck-trailer platforms with no sidewalls to protect the tree roots from the traffic wind of a warm June afternoon. One year later all eight trees were given their final rites and transplanted to the local landfill.

A sharp spade should be used when digging trees to assure root wounds are clean cut. Although leaving a soil ball attached to the root system will cause less root injury, soil is heavy and sometimes it is more convenient or even necessary to transport a tree without a soil ball.

Deciduous trees with a stem diameter of less than one inch and small deciduous shrubs may be dug either bare root or with a soil ball. Larger plants should only be dug with soil attached. Bare root transplanting should only be done in the spring and care must be taken to prevent damage to roots when removing the soil. Most shrub species require a root ball diameter of about two-thirds of the branch spread. The soil ball for trees should be a minimum of 12 inches for each one inch of trunk diameter.

Large shrubs and trees should have a trench dug deep enough to get below all of the major roots (usually 15 to 24 inches). The trench should be dug completely around the tree or shrub to be transplanted. This will provide the angle necessary for the spade to undercut roots directly under the soil ball. Shrubs under 4 feet tall do not typically require trenching because the soil balls are small enough for the spade to make the undercut without a trench. All roots around the plant must be severed before any lifting takes place. If the plant is removed from clay soils, any glazing of the soil ball should be roughened before burlapping or potting.

For more details on this topic, ask for a free bulletin "Transplanting Trees and Shrubs" available at our office by calling 701-577-4595.