

## PLANNING BEFORE YOU PLANT

Presented by Bob Hinojosa  
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### Why do you want to plant the tree?

- Provide shade
- Landscaping
- Edible fruit or provide food for animals
- Provide wind screen against north winds

### What size of tree can I plant?

Plan your planting to ensure enough growing space is available for your tree at its mature height and spread.

- Small tree is height of 20 feet or less. Need 7x9 ft. (60 square feet)
- Medium tree is height of 20-40feet. Need 10x12ft. (120 square feet)
- Large tree is height of 40 feet or more. Need 12x15ft. (180 square feet)

### Avoiding problems with your tree

- Avoid blocking traffic signs or street crossings
- Avoid planting too close to sidewalks, street or driveways
- Avoid planting trees too close together or too close to house
- Avoid planting large trees too close to power lines. Plant trees that will be smaller than twenty feet when fully grown.
- Plant large canopy trees (Forty feet or taller) at least fifty feet away from power lines.
- Medium size trees (less than forty feet) should be planted at least twenty feet from power lines.

### Trees are sold in three different configurations:

**BARE ROOT:** No soil around the roots. Bare root stock must be planted in early spring while dormant. Roots have to be protected from drying out before planting. Bare root is the most economical way to purchase trees/shrubs.

**BALLED AND BURLAPPED (B&B):** Large trees are often sold balled and burlapped and are the most expensive. Root ball is dug up and wrapped in burlap and sometimes supported with wire baskets. They can be planted anytime but care is needed in the hot summer months.

**CONTAINER GROWN:** The trees have usually been grown in a container for 1-2 seasons and have developed a root system. Usually smaller in size and lower in price than B&B stock.

### How to select a tree at the nursery

- Try to use a reputable nursery that sells lots of trees so inventory is fresh.
- Take a look at the tree, does it look healthy?
- Does it have discolored or diseased looking leaves?
- Take a good look at the bark, do you see signs any damage like hail damage or sun scald?
- Has the trunk been damaged by staking or by labels that have disfigured the trunk.
- Does it have a good central trunk?
- Trunk flare should be obvious, if you can't see the flare, dig down a little to find it.
- If you still can't find it, get another tree.
- Avoid trees that have roots growing out of pots. Ask a nursery worker if they can take the tree out of the pot to check for girdling roots. Avoid trees that have excessive girdling roots.

### Transporting the tree

- Use a bed sheet, shade cloth or some other protection when transporting in the back of a truck.

### Digging the hole "Don't put a \$100 dollar tree in a \$10 hole"

- Call 811 at least 48 hours before you dig, it's the law! They will mark utility lines so you don't damage them.
- As you dig, put topsoil to one side of the hole and deeper soil to another side.
- Hole should be 2-3 times wider than the root ball.

Sides of the hole should be rough, not smooth so that the roots can catch and start growing out.

#### Planting the tree

Hole should be slightly shorter than the depth of the root ball.

Remove the tree from the container. Do not pull the tree from the container by the trunk.

Carefully place the tree in the hole. The root flare should be slightly higher than ground level. You can spread out the roots to encourage lateral growth and discourage girdling.

Start filling the hole with the sub-soil, as you get closer to ground level, begin using the topsoil.

Don't use topsoil in the bottom of the hole because topsoil has more organic matter. Roots won't be forced to grow to find nutrients and will girdle.

Do not put fertilizer or compost in the tree hole.

#### Watering the tree

Start watering the tree immediately as you are filling the hole.

A good slow soaking so that the water fills the hole. You want to do this to make sure there are no air-pockets that could dry out the roots.

Trees vary in their water requirements.

It is best to water in the early evening to help trees recover from the heavy transpiration demands during the day. As a general rule, water daily for the first two weeks after planting with one gallon of water per inch of trunk diameter.

Then water weekly with seven gallons per inch of trunk diameter for the first year. These requirements will vary widely with your soil type, rainfall, temperature, wind etc, Goal is to get the soil moist 8-12" deep.

**Don't** leave a bowl shaped indentation **long term** for watering.

This will not encourage roots to grow out to seek water.

After the first month, use a soaker hose around the dripline to encourage outward root growth

Mulch can be used over the root area to help moderate temperature and moisture. Keep mulch away from the trunk 2-3 inches.

#### Staking the tree

According to the International Society of Arboriculture, "Studies have shown that trees establish more quickly and develop stronger trunk and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting." It is best to leave a tree without stakes, unless it just really needs the extra support.

#### Sun Scald Protection

Newly planted trees especially deciduous trees should be wrapped to prevent sun scald damage. Protect the trunk with a commercial tree wrap such as a polyurethane spiral wrap or craft paper wrap for the first two seasons after planting. The wrap should be applied in the fall but should be removed prior to trunk expansion each spring. Set a reminder to remove the wrap as it could suffocate the tree if left on too long!

#### Help Desk & Contact Information

**Williamson County Help Desk Email:** [williamsonhelpdesk@agnet.tamu.edu](mailto:williamsonhelpdesk@agnet.tamu.edu)

**Williamson County Help Desk Phone:** 512-943-3300

**Williamson County Master Gardener Website:** <https://txmg.org/williamson/>

**Williamson County Demonstration Gardens** 3151 SE Inner loop Road, Georgetown, Texas 78626. The gardens are open to the public. They are located to the right (north side) of the Williamson County Road District Building.

**Williamson County Extension Office** 100 Wilco Way, Suite AG201 Georgetown, Texas 78626 Phone:

512-943-3300 Fax: 512-943-3301 Web: <https://williamson.agrilife.org/> Email: [williamson-tx@tamu.edu](mailto:williamson-tx@tamu.edu)

**Tree Selection and Planting Guide** [https://txmg.org/williamson/files/Tree-Selection-and-Planting-Guide-for-](https://txmg.org/williamson/files/Tree-Selection-and-Planting-Guide-for-Williamson-County-TX.pdf)

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