

Yard and Garden – November 17, 2012- Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

How quickly time passes. Like everyone else, seventeen days ago, I turned the page on my calendar to the month of November. While doing so, I hastily recalled the many autumn gardening tasks I had already completed and reminded myself of those I have yet to finish.

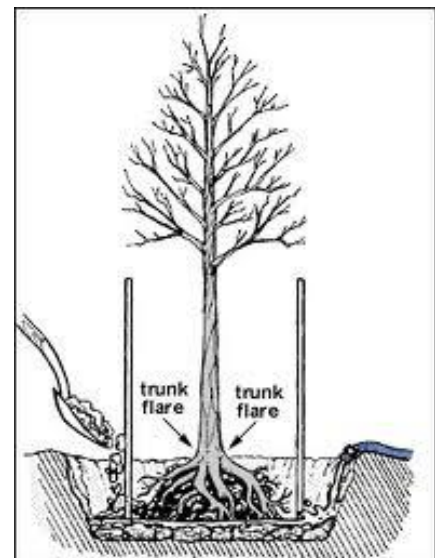
Five to six weeks ago, I beat Jack Frost to the punch. I picked most remaining tomatoes from the garden and carried them indoors where they now continue to ripen. I transported a number of our potted plants to the basement and placed them under lights, so we can continue enjoying them throughout the winter months. I lifted our non-hardy bulbs including canna, calla, elephant ears and caladium, and I am currently preparing them for winter storage. In mid-October I treated the lawn for broadleaf weeds, and I recently fertilized our lawn for the last time this season. Our vegetable garden has been cleared of all dead vegetation. I put away the tomato cages and rolled up the soaker hoses. All garden hoses are disconnected from the hydrants, but I am keeping them handy for watering on warm, sunny days. I shut down our automatic lawn sprinkler system for the season. Almost daily, I shred leaves and spread them over the vegetable garden.

Although it may appear that I've completed most autumn gardening duties, one important task yet remains.

Eight weeks ago, I attended the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum recognition dinner. While there, I purchased four small potted trees. Since bringing them home I've routinely watered them, but they urgently need to be planted. Did you know autumn is the perfect time to plant deciduous trees?

I intend to follow the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's tree planting suggestions.

- Call the diggers hotline before digging.
- Dig a planting hole of adequate size. The hole should be broad and shallow. It should be as deep as the root ball and three times as wide as the root ball.
- Prepare the tree. Trees are typically sold as balled and burlapped, bare root, or container grown. Remove all coverings and containers before planting the tree.
- Place the tree in the planting hole at the proper depth. The trunk flare should sit at or just above ground level. The trunk flare is the area at the base of the tree where the roots begin spreading.
- Begin filling the planting hole with soil. When the hole is approximately one-third full, gently pack and water. Continue filling the planting hole, stopping every few inches to settle the soil with water.
- Stake the tree, if necessary. Newly planted trees may need staking to prevent damage or uprooting from the wind.
- Place a two-to-four inch layer of organic mulch, such as bark or wood chips, around the base of the tree. Mulch holds moisture in the soil, maintains a moderate soil temperature, and retards weeds.



- Provide follow-up care. Keep the soil around the newly planted tree moist, but not saturated. Typically, it is sufficient to water once a week, but under hot, dry conditions, water more frequently.

One great advantage exists when planting deciduous trees in autumn compared with spring planting. Although frost has caused most deciduous trees to lose their leaves, the soil remains warm. Planting a tree in autumn creates an excellent opportunity for root growth, thus giving the newly planted tree an improved chance of surviving the heat of summer — a definite advantage not available to trees planted in the spring.

Knowing this, I'd better get busy planting. After all, as quickly as time flies, autumn will soon be changing to winter.