

Views from VanDeWalle

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September 11, 2024

Tree Planting Tips

There is always room to plant another tree, in our own yard or even at a public location such as parks, churches, and schools. Good plant growth starts with proper planting. If a tree is not planted correctly it will struggle for many years and maybe even die after only a few years in the ground. Nicole Stoner, local Horticulture Extension Educator and Certified Arborist has great information to consider when planting trees.

Diversity

Deciding what tree to plant is very important and can be a difficult decision because there are so many trees to choose from. Diversity is key when choosing your tree. The general rule is to plant no more than 10% of a tree species, no more than 20% of a tree genus, and no more than 30% of a tree family in a respective urban area.

Diversity of our tree species helps reduce future problems from widespread disease and insect outbreaks. Look around at what types of trees you have and what types of trees your neighbors have before deciding on a new tree, try to avoid over-planting the same few trees throughout the neighborhood. Plus, diversity of trees is more aesthetically pleasing because of the different leaf and bark textures, different bloom times, and overall differences in trees.

Planting a Tree

The most important factor to keep in mind when planting trees is planting it correctly to ensure healthy growth. First, remove all the burlap and any other materials from the root ball before planting. Also remove any tags, twine, or wire from the tree. Remember to remove all the grass and weeds that are within the area you will be planting the tree. Dig a hole that is 2-3 times wider and no deeper than the root ball and loosen up the sides of the hole. Plant the tree so that first lateral roots are just below the soil surface. Do not amend the soil that is in the hole, backfill with the existing soil. Make sure that the entire root ball is covered with soil to avoid drying out.

Care of Trees

Keep newly planted trees well-watered. Always water newly planted trees, shrubs, or any other plant immediately after planting. Trees should be watered every 10-14 days throughout the growing season and even some during the winter on warmer days. Each

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watering should give the tree 1-2 inches of water. The best way to determine if a tree needs to be watered is to insert a soil probe or 12-inch-long screwdriver into the ground around the tree. If it goes in easily there is no need to water, if it is difficult at any point then water is necessary for the tree.

A mulch ring should be established and maintained around every tree. Organic mulch, or wood chips, are a better choice than inorganic mulches. It will help keep the roots cool in the summer and regulated to a uniform temperature through the winter. Mulch will also help keep weeds down and reduce competition from those weeds for water and nutrients. Reducing weed competition around the tree reduces damage to the trunk from lawn mowers and trimmers. Finally, mulch is a way to hold moisture for use later by the tree. Mulch rings should be only 2-3 inches deep and in a circle around the tree at least 2-3 feet out.