



September 23, 2016

PLANT TREES THIS FALL

Take advantage of the fall nursery sales and plant some trees this fall. Make sure to water them in if Mother Nature doesn't help as well as using mulch. You can take a look at the top ten mistakes homeowners make when planting trees at:

<http://retreenebraska.unl.edu/Documents/toptenmistakes.pdf>

We know about the ash trees that are at risk in the future due to the European Ash borer's recent arrival in the Omaha and Ashland areas. Considering this, it is good to plan ahead when thinking about replacing trees. The trouble is consumers often want a fast-growing tree with nice spring flowers and good fall color. They also would prefer a tree that is not messy and won't drop any fruit; while at the same time, not growing too tall and surviving with little to no care. These expectations are slightly unrealistic.

There is a new technology with tree planting that is worth checking into. It's all about the roots. The growing of trees in fabric containers, commonly known as "grow bags", is a growing trend in the nursery industry. Grow bags are designed to allow some root penetration into or through the bag and the consequential "trapping" or "pinching" of the roots at that point, greatly reduces their circling or girdling within the bag.

Potential benefits of fabric containers are a fibrous, non-circling root system and a longer transplanting season. The Nebraska Forest Service is working with Nebraska nurseries and growers to expand the availability of trees grown in fabric containers. Additional research and trials that are being conducted in other states are comparing some of the more prominent fabric container systems.

Dr. Carl Whitcomb, inventor of Rootmaker® Products, holds a Ph.D. from Iowa State University and was a professor at Oklahoma State University for 13 years. An expert on plant root systems, he has been published in hundreds of trade and technical magazines. He is the author of four books and he holds 26 patents, including many container designs.

Whitcomb's Rootmaker® system is the primary method that a tree farm near York, NE uses to grow trees. These "root pruning" containers create fibrous root system using air, constriction, and trapping. By promoting root branching, roots have a greater surface area resulting in superior performance.

With good absorption of water and nutrients, you should experience an increase in growth rate, establishment, transplant survivability, and ultimately, a superior performance.



Next time at a nursery ask for trees grown in grow bags, RootMaker pots, or other containers designed to minimize circling roots. If you have to purchase a tree in a smooth plastic container, inspect the root ball for circling roots. If you're not comfortable doing it yourself, ask a garden center employee to gently remove the tree from its container so you can examine things carefully.

DO NOT buy trees with a heavy mass of circling roots. If the outside of the root ball is completely matted with roots, look for another plant! A few roots growing around the outside of the root ball can be handled, but stay away from a tree with a dense, crowded mass of roots.

For more information and tree species recommendation go to: <http://nfs.unl.edu/landscapetrees>

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