

Tree Talk

Can You Plant Trees in the Summer?

When thinking about planting trees, many folks think mainly of spring and Arbor Day as the time to plant them. Spring is an excellent time to plant trees and probably our best time to do so, but it is not the only time of year we can plant.

There are four types of planting material we can choose from when planting a tree: bare-root, containerized, balled and burlapped, and tree spaded. Bare-root trees are those kept in a cooler with their roots exposed and kept moist. They are normally dug in the fall or early spring and transferred to cold storage until they can be sold and planted. Bare-root trees are normally only available in the spring and can be purchased at most nurseries in the state. Bare-root trees usually give the consumer the best bang for their buck. You are not paying extra for the tree to be potted and re-sold as a containerized tree.

Containerized trees are those that have been planted in a pot and sold 1-2 years later. Unlike bare-root, these trees can be planted in spring, summer and fall. Containerized trees do not require cold storage to keep them in a dormant stage, so they are readily available throughout the growing season. Be sure to check for large circling roots by pulling the tree out of the pot before purchase. This will ensure you are not buying a tree that has been in a pot for too long and has a potential for girdling roots.



Balled and burlapped trees are another good option for those who would like to start out with a larger tree. These trees are dug out of the ground. Burlap along with wire baskets are used to keep the existing soil around the roots. These trees are large and more cumbersome to handle, but can be planted throughout the growing season. It is highly recommended to completely remove the burlap, twine and wire basket before filling the planting hole in with soil. This will ensure that future root girdling will not take place.

The fourth option is using a tree spade to move trees from one spot to another. These trees are obviously more expensive and have to be planted with a tree spade. Depending on the size of the tree being moved, it is very important that the size of the tree spade is large enough to ensure the tree has enough roots to prosper.

Whichever option is chosen, it is important to remember that all of these trees need supplemental watering and an organic mulch applied in order to survive. Watering once a day for the first 2-3 weeks and once or twice a week thereafter for the next couple years will help your tree establish itself and ensure good quality growth. Organic mulch prevents grass from competing with the tree for water and nutrients. It also prevents damage to the tree from lawn mowers and weed trimmers. Mulch should be placed around the trunk at least as far out as the branches reach. Keep the mulch 6 inches from the base of the tree and only 2 – 3 inches deep.

*Aaron Kiesz is the
Urban Forestry Specialist
For the S.D. Div. of Resource
Conservation and Forestry, 1-800-228-5254
Website: www.state.sd.us/doa/forestry/index.htm*