

Archive for September, 2011

Fall Planting

Saturday, September 17th, 2011

Planting trees in the fall can be successful if one avoids a couple of pitfalls:

1. Be sure the planting stock you plan to use has been treated properly at the nursery or garden center where it was held over the summer. Avoid stock, whether or not it's been containerized, that has been held in a temporary garden center location at a discount store. Check the stem and leaves for drought and pest damage. Be skeptical of stock that is offered at sale or "close out" prices. The better the condition of the planting stock, the better chance it will have of making it through the winter unscathed.
2. Plant the tree correctly, and mulch it generously. Proper mulching will help prevent frost heaving while the root system is still trying to become established. Mulch, mulch, mulch.....
3. If you plant stock that has been freshly lifted from the soil, even if it's potted or balled and burlapped, be sure to handle it carefully, because it is probably not fully dormant if it was dug up before Thanksgiving (in Missouri anyway). Most trees never go fully dormant until early December, under normal weather conditions, so handling the stock carefully to avoid unnecessary damage to still growing roots and shoots becomes doubly important to insure future success.

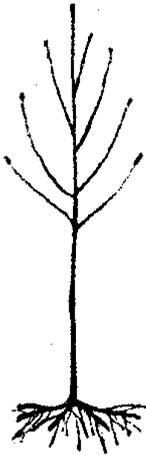
Using proper planting and aftercare techniques are always important when planting most tree species, no matter what time of the year, but fall planting can present greater challenges especially since there is a lot of planting taking place before cold weather sets in. Doing the job right becomes critical, if you don't want to waste time and money.



Balled and Burlapped



Container Grown



Bare Root



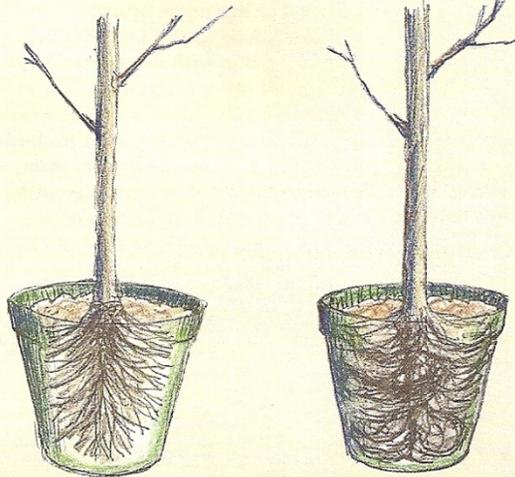
Potted



Beware of Girdling Roots!

Southern magnolia is a tree that is particularly susceptible to a problem called "girdling" or "circling" roots. This condition occurs when transplanted trees remain too long in a pot or can. The roots try to grow but run into the side of the container. Since they have nowhere else to go, they follow the outline of the container in a circular pattern.

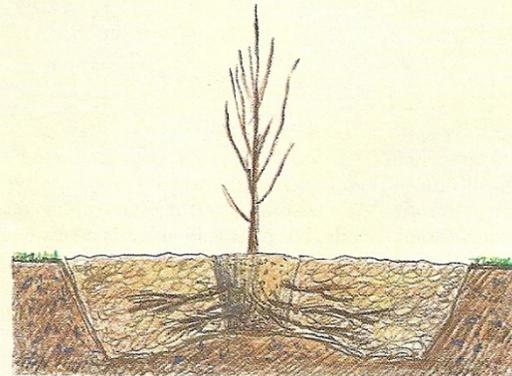
The old saying, "As the twig is bent, so grows the tree," applies not only to branches and children, but to roots as well. When a tree with circling roots is removed from the container and planted, unless special care is taken the roots will continue to grow in a circular track. As their diameter increases, they can become constricted, cutting off the normal flow of water and nutrients. This can lead to decline and death. Circling roots also deprive the tree of stability, making it prone to falling in the wind.



Better

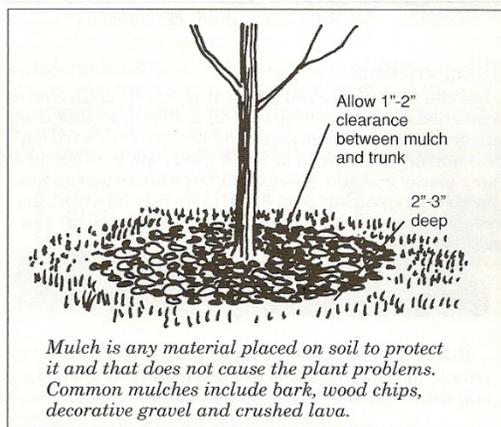
Worse

When possible, avoid buying nursery stock that has been in containers too long (as evidenced by circling roots).



To correct potted trees with circling roots:

- ✓ Remove container or wrapping material
- ✓ Plant on a firm, raised bottom of the hole
- ✓ Carefully spread out the circling roots to as close to a right angle with the trunk as possible
- ✓ Cut (smoothly) any roots that are too severely circled to straighten, especially near the top of the soil ball
- ✓ Fill hole while holding roots in place
- ✓ Mulch and water



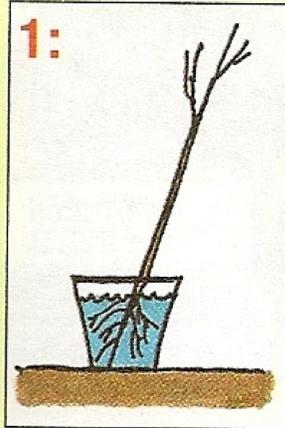
Mulch is any material placed on soil to protect it and that does not cause the plant problems. Common mulches include bark, wood chips, decorative gravel and crushed lava.

Mulch

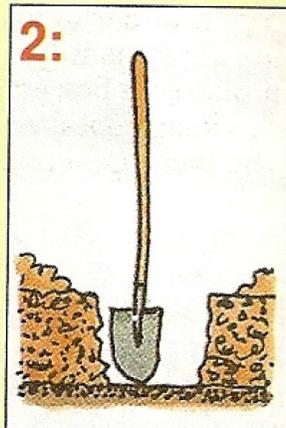
Mulch is a young tree's best friend. It holds down competing weeds or grass, retains soil moisture, prevents soil cracking that can damage new roots, protects the trunk from lawnmower damage, and helps prevent soil compaction. Organic mulches such as wood chips or pine needles also contribute to better soil structure and aeration as they decompose. Avoid limestone rock and allow no mulch to touch the tree's trunk or be piled higher than 3 inches.

Planting Bare-Root Trees

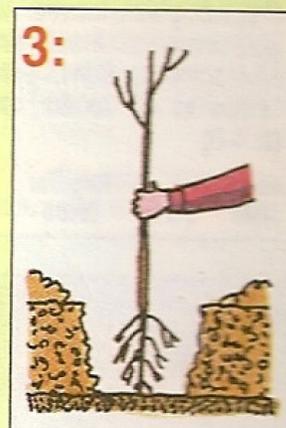
It is best to plant bare-root trees immediately, in order to keep the fragile roots from drying out. If you can't plant because of weather or soil conditions, store the trees in a cool place and keep the roots moist.



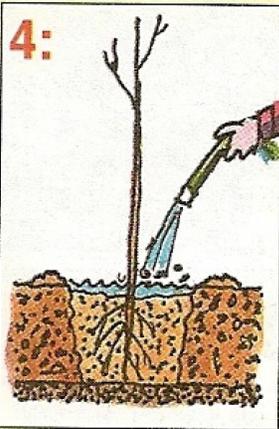
1: Unpack tree and soak in water 3 to 6 hours. Do not plant with packing material attached to roots and do not allow roots to dry out.



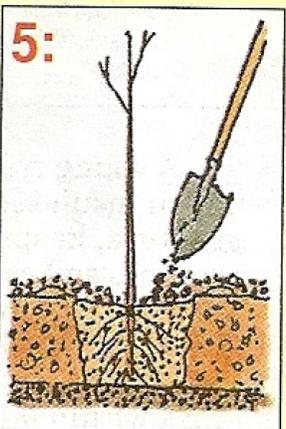
2: Dig a hole, wider than seems necessary, so the roots can spread without crowding. Remove any grass within a 3-foot circular area. To aid root growth, turn soil in an area up to 3 feet in diameter.



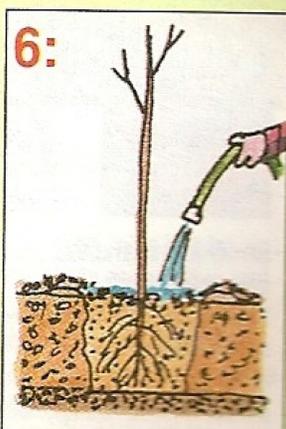
3: Plant the tree at the same depth it stood in the nursery, without crowding the roots. Partially fill the hole, firming the soil around the lower roots. Do not add soil amendments, such as peat or bark.



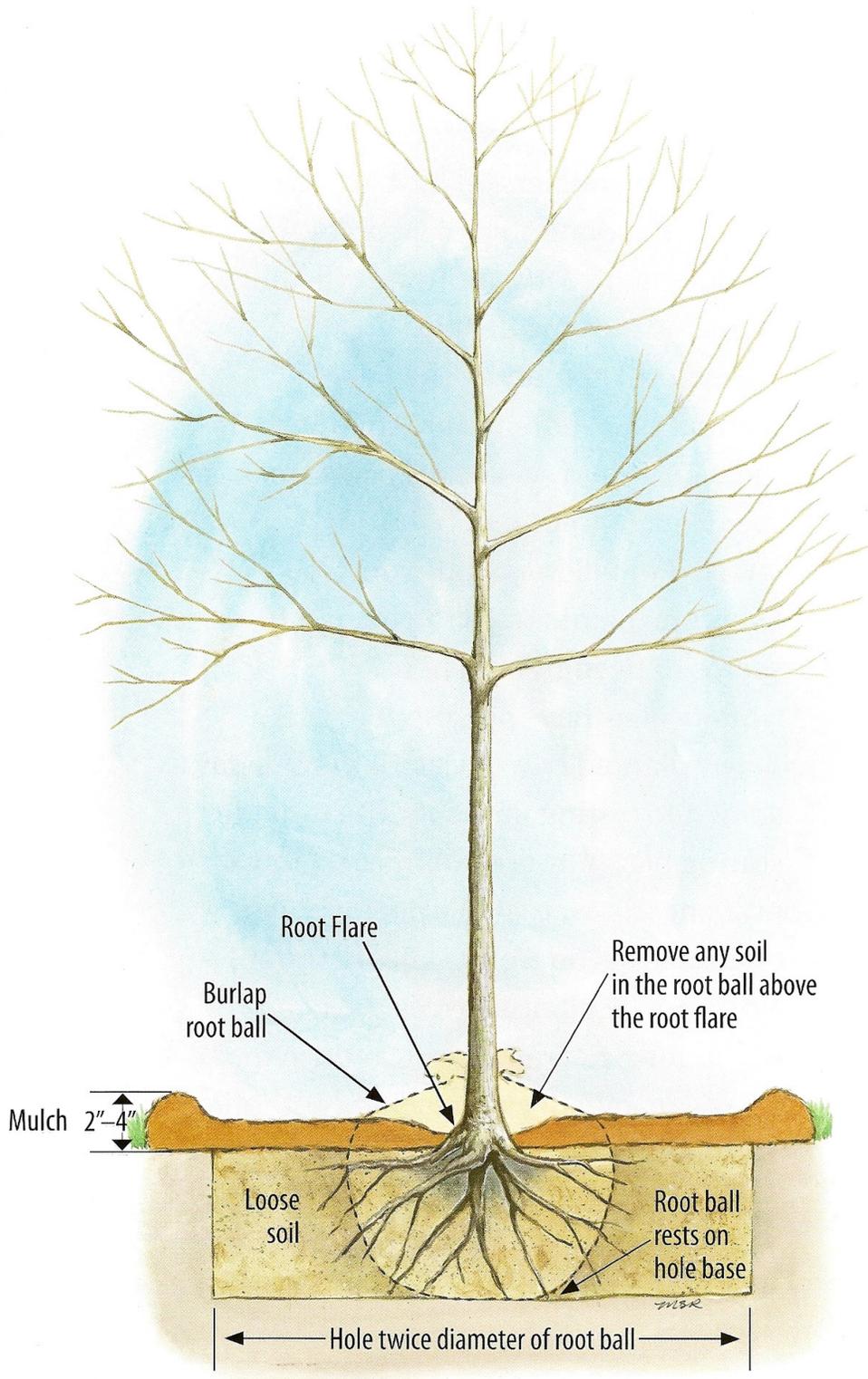
4: Shovel in the remaining soil. It should be firmly but not tightly packed. Construct a water-holding basin around the tree. Give the tree plenty of water.



5: After the water has soaked in, place a 2-inch deep protective mulch in an area 3 feet in diameter around the base of the tree (but not touching the trunk.)



6: During dry weather, generously water the tree every week or 10 days during the first year. Water slowly at the dripline.



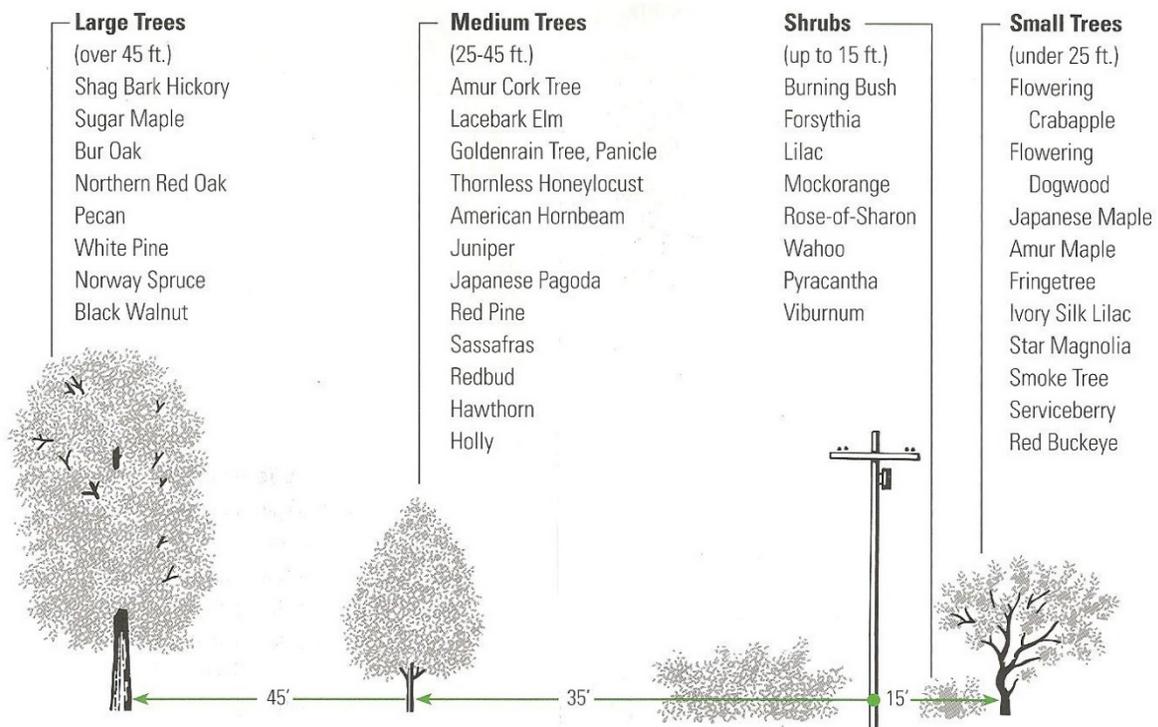
Planting And Powerlines

Wednesday, September 28th, 2011

I've ranted on in these logs about planting the right tree in the right place, from time to time (almost constantly according to some), because it is so important to give a tree a fighting chance to succeed and become all it can be over the long haul. Nowhere is it more important to plant the right tree in the right place than where overhead power lines may be nearby. I've ranted (occasionally) about using care around utility lines, even the underground ones, and have provided guidance on how to avoid conflicts between the trees and lines. So, for all you fall planters out there, here is another simple reminder diagram (Courtesy of Ameren Missouri) for choosing and planting near overhead lines. It's good advice for underground lines too. Click the drawing to enlarge. Good planting!

EXAMPLES OF PLANTINGS THAT PROVIDE SAFE SPACING FROM OVERHEAD LINES

Please use this guide to help determine the best tree choices near service lines and poles.



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