

## *Spring Planting Advice*

Spring is the time to prepare for the new growing season and plant new trees and shrubs that will enhance your property, and provide shade and leafy green growth year after year. When you think about planting a new tree, don't stop at where you'll dig a hole – there are many factors to consider before you plant. The difference can mean a tree that will enjoy long-term health - and a tree that will not thrive and possibly endanger other trees or structures that surround it.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU PLANT:

**Site selection.** Be very particular in considering a planting site. Select an area that is well removed from building structures and electric lines. Will the tree receive the right amount of light for its variety? Also visualize the hindrances the tree will encounter after ten, 20, or 30 years of growth – does the tree fit your space later on?

**Tree Variety.** Select the tree best suited for the climate in your area and the environmental conditions of the site. Many hybrid and ornamental trees are sold in locations that are at the extreme edge of their survivability zones. In order for a tree like this to survive, it will need to be planted in a sheltered area on a property. Use a reputable nursery and ask many questions – and/or first seek help from your local university co-operative extension office.

### Planting Techniques:

- **Do not plant the tree too deep.** The depth of the rootball is a good rule of thumb for the depth of planting. If the roots are too far below the surface, they will suffocate or grow upward in an attempt to reach closer to the surface.
- **Make the hole large enough.** The planting whole should preferably be 2-3 times as wide as the root ball. Also, loosen the soil around the edges of the hole, which will help the young roots grow outward.
- **Avoid making changes to soil.** Generally speaking, fertilization is not needed at the time of planting.

### AFTER YOU PLANT, CONSIDER:

**Watering.** Soil moisture is especially important during the first three years following transplanting. Studies have shown that the carbohydrate levels critical for root generation are not lowered if transplanted trees are adequately watered. One inch of water each week for the first season is a good rule of thumb, but monitoring soil moisture and applying water as needed is preferable. Remember, over-watering can reduce soil air space and lower oxygen availability, which can be just as stressful for your tree as drought.

**Mulching.** Mulching a large area around newly planted trees with 3 to 4 inches of wood chips or bark conserves soil moisture and moderates soil temperatures. Mulch also inhibits the growth of grass – and grass roots can present serious competition to the fine absorbing root system of trees. Mulch should be pulled back from the trunk of the tree to prevent damage to the trunk, which can lead to insect or disease problems. And watch out for too much of a good thing – mulch layers deeper than 3-4 inches may actually inhibit the air and water circulation that is most beneficial to your tree.