

Branching Out – Tree Care Tips

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Celebrate Arbor Day; Carefully Plant a Tree!

As Arbor Day fast approaches, (Friday, April 27th, 2007) our thoughts turn to spring and planting new trees. Celebrate the wondrous benefits of trees and make a wise investment by planting a shade tree in your yard. Caution, however, before you plant! Take some advice from the experts to help your new tree live a long time.

Too often, consumers waste hundreds of dollars on trees that will die because of improper planting. Proper planting is absolutely essential in the success of a transplanted tree. Using quality plants and following up with good tree care practices; such as watering, pruning and fertilizing, will aid in having success but *will not* save a poorly planted tree.

After 19 year of practicing tree care in Random Lake, The Arborists at Gluck Tree Care, Inc. contribute many tree health issues to improper planting. The most common mistake is planting the root ball too deep. Make sure to dig the hole 1-3 inches *shallower* and 2-3 times the diameter of the root ball. The tree should be planted so that the root flare, (the base of the tree trunk where the roots begin to flare-out) is visible and above grade. If planted too deep the excess soil will suffocate the root system, cause small, stunted growth, and eventual death. We have dug many planting baskets out of the ground, still left on the plants. These baskets are for shipping purposes only and should be removed prior to planting; there is no benefit to leaving these on the plant. Without removal of the basket it is impossible to determine the proper planting depth. You can't see where the trunk ends and the roots begin. Also roots will use excessive energy trying to get through the basket. This energy would be better directed to growth of the plant.

If buying trees in a pot, beware of "pot-bound" trees. Do not plant container trees that have a large amount of roots completely circling the inside of the pot. These trees will take a long time to get established after planting because the roots have difficulty growing beyond the thick ring of circling roots. A common mistake with container grown trees is not pruning the roots. Container grown trees can have up to 50% of the roots pruned where balled and burlapped trees can only have up to 10% pruned. Always remove ALL containers, shipping baskets, wire, rope etc. before planting.

Back fill with good soil and amendments, using water to pack or settle the soil around the root ball. Mulch with 2-4 inches of organic mulch such as wood chips, but DO NOT mulch up against the trunk. Prune only broken branches as trees need as many green leaves as possible to absorb the sunlight for food. Stake only if there is a real potential for wind damage. Do not wrap until in the fall, and do not fertilize until the following season.

If you have additional questions, would like help or information on tree planting or tree care, please contact a professional, certified arborist. Gluck Tree Care, Inc. of Random Lake employs certified arborists and has over 20 years of arboriculture experience. Certified arborists must follow stringent safety and performance standards, are required to have insurance, and have a trained and professional staff, that is dedicated to ethics and quality in business practices.