**Tree Planting Time**

With the cold temperatures we have been having, it is hard to think about planting trees. What is a better way to start the New Year? Now is the time to plant your trees, especially if you are planting bareroot fruit or nut trees. With all trees, it is recommended that you plant well before hot weather begins; this will give the plants time to grow some roots and get established before the hot, dry weather of summer. If you are planning to plant trees, be sure you are ready and have a plan before you get your trees. Proper planning can make a big difference in the survival of your new trees or shrubs. There are various ways to purchase trees to be planted container, balled-and-burlapped, and bareroot.

Container plants have the advantage of having all their roots intact and ready to grow if the pot was properly cared for. Be careful that the container tree does not have girdling issues and is not root bound. If the tap root has begun to circle the pot, it is best to cut the taproot back and let it start new. When planting a container grown plant, dig a hole bigger than the plant by double the width but no deeper. Remove the container and plant into the hole as quickly as possible. Air kills the little white hair roots very fast; this makes it critical that you get it in the ground quickly.

Balled and burlapped plants are not container grown and you need to understand that before ordering them. These plants may have been grown in a nursery, but they were dug out of the ground so that many of the roots may have been cut off. When you get a balled and burlapped plant, remove all plastic including any string or twine- you can leave the burlap if it is not plastic. The biggest problem with balled and burlapped trees is that the hole is usually dug with the same tree spade that dug the tree. Tree spades leave the hole sides very slick and hard which makes it difficult for the roots to penetrate. The best hole is wider but not deeper than the ball.

Bare root trees are simply that, they are purchased with no soil attached to the roots. Roots should be wrapped in peat moss and burlap or something similar to keep them moist. Bare root trees are much cheaper to purchase. Bare root trees typically keep much more of their root system during harvest than balled trees. Some research has indicated that bare root trees have 200% more root mass than balled or burlapped trees. Bare root trees will not have the root circling and girdling issues that are common in container trees. The major disadvantage of bare root trees is they have to be planted soon after harvest and immediately after being opened. Roots desiccation is the biggest issue with bare root trees; getting them in the ground quickly is critical. They are also not going to be as aesthetically pleasing initially as planting a larger balled or burlap tree, but they will catch up quite quickly.

Regardless of how you purchase your trees, having a watering plan for your new trees is going to determine the success of the plantings. Drip irrigation is ideal, but hand watering or using tree irrigator bags are options that can work, depending on the number of trees you intend to plant.

Finally, I recommend you purchase your trees from a local nursery, rather than a big chain store. Usually, the local nurseries are going to have varieties that will do well in your area, and they will have the experience and expertise to help you get started on the right foot. Planting trees can be fun and add beauty or functionality to your landscape, but to avoid failure, be prepared.