

Time to plant trees!

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Earth Day was yesterday and Arbor Day is this coming Friday. Why not consider adding a tree to your landscape to contribute to the greening effort?

An old Chinese proverb says the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today. Plant one now for future generations to enjoy.

When making your species selection, consider the site and location of the tree. Remember that trees GROW and need space. Learn about the specifics for the tree that you are considering, including the mature height, spread, and soil requirements.

Make sure you look up and down before planting. Never plant a tree under utility wires unless you are ok with a funny-looking tree. In the future these must be pruned to allow for line clearance and people usually don't like the final result. Don't plant it under wires in the first place!

Also, be sure to call 811 before you dig. The utilities will come out within 48 hours of your call and mark your underground lines so that you won't cause any damage when digging.

Through the years we have learned, well, let me rephrase that, I hope we have learned by now to focus on planting diverse species instead of everyone planting the same thing.

Back in the 60s our streets were lined with American elms. These beautiful upright, arching trees were perfect for the curb lawn. Their habit provided a grand arch of filtered shade over the city street.

However, because that is all that was planted along many streets, there was nothing left of the canopy once Dutch elm disease came through and wiped them out.

If you are thinking about planting a tree on the curb lawn, take a look up and down the street to see what else is planted. Try to diversity the tree canopy as much as possible.

For instance, maple, elms and oaks are all in different families and are not susceptible to the same pest problems. If something ends up effecting all of the maples, you still have other trees in the landscape.

And finally, if you are going to plant a tree, plant it properly.

Make sure that the root flare is just at or slightly above ground level. The root flare is the part of the tree where the trunk transitions into roots.

If you plant a tree too deep, the roots lack oxygen. This leads to the development of a secondary root system that has a tendency to circle around the trunk instead of growing out, away from the trunk.

This can lead to stem girdling roots in which the roots cut off the flow of sugars in the plant, leading to decline or possibly death.



Tree-lined street in Beijing, China