

Still time to plant

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Back when I started my career in the early 80's, the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association had a campaign called "Fall is for Planting." The idea was to help increase sales at garden centers during the fall season.

In reality, you can plant just about any time of the year, as long as you can dig the soil. However, there are certainly better times than others for greatest success.

You can plant trees and shrubs in the middle of the summer for instance, but you have to be very conscientious about watering.

Spring is about the best time of the year because you typically get good spring rains to help establish a plant.

Fall really is a good time of the year to plant but earlier in the fall is better. For instance, September and October are great for planting.

November into December is not a bad time either. We sometimes forget that fall goes into December for several weeks. Therefore, if you are finding good buys at the garden centers and hardware stores, don't pass them up!

Increase your success with fall planting by making sure the tree, shrub or perennial is watered in thoroughly.

We are exceptionally dry this fall and extra watering might be required. While we don't have the warm temperatures that will cause a plant to lose moisture faster, we do have dry soil.

Be sure to soak any trees, shrubs or perennials thoroughly after you water.

In addition, perennials and small shrubs (anything with a small root system) should be mulched after the ground freezes. This may be sometime in December.

A protective (up to ten inches or more) layer of mulch around the base of the plant will prevent heaving of the soil. Heaving occurs when the soil freezes and thaws during the winter.

Remove this mulch in mid-March or as soon as the plants start breaking bud.

Another fall task is to protect your trees from deer. Adult males are in the process of rubbing their antlers on tree bark and the resulting damage can be devastating, especially to young trees.

I had a major issue with deer rubbing several of my young trees last year. This year, I only have one that has been damaged. I have been on the lookout for them!

You may also consider wrapping the thin bark of newly-planted trees just for the winter season. While wrapping is not recommended (because people usually tend to forget to remove the wrapping which leads to problems) it can be done to prevent frost cracking.

Frost cracking occurs on young, thin-barked trees in the middle of winter. The sun hits the south side of the bark during the day, and then temperatures drop suddenly at night, causing the cells to split on this side of the tree. The result is a crack in the trunk of the tree.

Wrapping just for the winter helps to prevent this problem.