

Planning for Trees

This is the first in a 3-part series on tree planning, planting and pruning. In the first article, we will address the steps involved with the planning process. It's important to understand just a few basic guidelines for landscaping prior to getting started. Let's take a look at planning, design and tree selection.

Planning

No matter how well we plan a project, something may still go wrong. However, following these steps during the planning stage will help keep you focused and ensure your success.

- Determine what materials and equipment you will need. For example, you may need to remove a fence and that will require specific equipment and resources. Also, always be aware of any overhead power lines.
- The root ball of a 12-foot tree can weigh about 400 pounds. You won't be able to manually handle this without causing some damage to the root system when you drag it and you run the risk of transplant shock.
- If you need to bring in heavy equipment, you may damage your lawn and incur additional cost for repairs. So, consider planting a smaller tree that you can manually handle without the use of equipment.
- You will also need to consider the impact to an in-ground irrigation system and other utilities. Contact your local service company (OKIE) to identify where the lines are. Utility lines can be easily damaged with a shovel or a bobcat. This will also provide you an opportunity to determine if you want to revamp the system to accommodate your new tree.
- Pay attention to the weather forecast. You don't want to get caught up in a heavy rainfall and turn your planting site into a total muddy mess

Designing

Following a few basic design principles will leave you with a beautiful and lavish landscape which will benefit you for many years. Although we all have our own unique style, keep these guidelines in mind.

- Repeating patterns and shapes provides what landscape designers refer to as a nice rhythm and flow. Interval planting is a common technique down driveways or for privacy from neighbors.
- Plant flowing curves for an informal design and straight lines for a more formal affect.
- Consider the width and height of your trees and keep them in proportion with your entire yard and house to keep all things in balance.
- If you have a single story or ranch style home, consider medium and small size shade trees. Plant larger and taller trees with two-story homes.
- Consider low maintenance ground cover, mulch and decorative rocks as an accent. Several ground covers will not only grow, but thrive, in the shade of trees. OSU Fact sheet [HLA-6608](#) has several listed as alternatives to turf grass in the shade of a tree.
- Be practical with your design. Don't make it awkward or too challenging to maintain. For example, making certain that curves can be easily mowed around.

Tree Selection

Trees come in wide varieties, shapes, sizes and heights. Depending on the size, you can benefit from an instant canopy without having to wait for years of growth. However, this may require assistance from a professional to deliver and plant the tree. The upside is most trees come with a warranty if installed by the nursery and don't die because of neglect by the purchaser. The downside is this will cost more.

- Depending on the variety, most people can handle an 8-foot tree and the root ball with two sets of strong hands.
- Trees grown at a nursery have a better success rate than trees from the wild. This is because they are prepared for eventual planting at the nursery.
- Consider the various types of stock:

- a. Balled and burlapped (B&B): Soil and roots wrapped in burlap
- b. Container Grown: Grown in the container with the soil and easy to transplant by simply removing it from the container.
- c. Bare Root: Just as the name implies – there's no soil involved, but requires higher maintenance

➤ Decide the species, type and size of the tree to be planted

It's nice to have a larger tree to start with, but smaller trees thrive faster and suffer less transplant shock. Always consider the full mature size of the selected tree when picking a planting location. Work with your local nurseries and take some time to research online to make certain you know whether your tree will perform well in your soil and what the watering requirements are.

Next month, we will look at the actual tree planting aspects themselves. So, in the meantime, plan now in order to reap the benefits of your efforts.