

# UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

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### Still Time for Fall Tree Planting

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Fall is a great time to plant trees in Nebraska as the humidity and heat has decreased, causing newly planted trees less stress.

Diversity is very important in tree selection. We all aware of the problems Dutch Elm Disease and Chestnut Blight caused in the early to mid 1900's. Now, we're seeing what is happening in other states to the Ash trees due to Emerald Ash Borer and what is happening to our Pine trees due to Pine Wilt.

### Selection

To limit the damage caused by any insect or disease, we need to plant an array of tree species in our landscapes. Due to this need for diversity, the Nebraska Forest Service's ReTree Nebraska program recommends trees that we should use in our landscapes. The list of 13 trees for 2013 includes: Baldcypress, Catalpa, Kentucky Coffeetree, Elm Hybrids, Sugar Maple, Shantung Maple, Miyabi Maple, Chinkapin Oak, Bur Oak, English Oak, Gamble Oak, Tree Lilac, Concolor Fir and Black Hills Spruce.

When planting a tree, consider overhead and underground utilities, future construction sites, and the mature size of the plant. Large trees should be planted a minimum of 15 to 20 feet away from buildings and a minimum of 20 to 25 feet from overhead power lines.

Purchasing a 3-6 foot tree saves money, and results in a tree that re-establishes faster and outgrows more expensive alternatives. Do not purchase any trees that are root bound in their container, meaning that the roots are very thick and matted along the outside of the root mass.

## **Planting**

When planting a tree, ensure it is planted correctly or it will not live as long as it should. You should start by pulling the tree out of its container. Remove all wraps and ropes from around the roots of balled and burlapped trees, including the burlap. Then, gently remove excess soil and get down to the main root ball. Remove soil from the top of the root ball until you find the root flare, and tease out any circling roots so that the root system can be spread out in the planting hole.

When planting the tree, the hole should be only as deep as the remaining root ball and twice as wide. (The tree's root flare, where the first lateral roots emerge from the trunk, should be visible at the soil surface when the tree is planted.) Then fill the hole back in with the soil you dug out of it. Don't amend the planting hole with top soil or compost, unless you can amend the entire area of the tree's mature root system.

## **Mulch**

Finally, add a mulch ring around the tree. Mulch helps keep the roots cool, holds moisture for the tree, and keeps weeds, turf, and lawn equipment out away from the trunk of the tree. The mulch ring should be 2-3 inches deep and should go out at least 2-3 feet away from the base of the trunk.

## **Staking**

Only stake the tree if it necessary, and leave the staking equipment on the tree for only one growing season. There are many different ways to stake a tree, just make sure that the staking equipment is loose on your tree allowing it to move in slight winds. Movement in a tree in the first few years of growth will help it to establish better and stronger roots to hold it in stronger winds.