

Tree Transplant and Staking

By Forrest Connelly

November is here and that can mean is that optimum time is here for your transplanting of trees and ornamental shrubs in the lawn. While it never hurts to wait into the cold winter to transplant, sometimes the ground can be hard making it more difficult to transplant than this time of year.

Sometimes when we install tall plants/trees staking may be needed or they may fall over or lean to one side. Staking may be necessary due to a weak trunk and/or by limited roots for anchoring the plant in the ground. Small and medium size B&B or container-grown plants usually do not need staking.

A general rule of thumb is to provide support for all bare-root plants over 8 feet and container and B&B trees over 6 feet or 1 inch or more in trunk diameter.

A single stake about three-fourth the height of the tree should be driven at a distance of 2 to 4 inches from the center of the planting hole, so that the stake will be on the southwest side of the tree trunk. This should be done before the tree is placed in the hole. After the planting is completed, fasten the tree (just above the lowest scaffold branches) to the stake with 12-gauge wire or a suitable substitute formed in a loose loop. You can use of piece of old rubber hose to prevent damage to the bark of the tree. Under no circumstances should this method of staking be used on B&B or container-grown plants. If driven through the root ball, the stake will cause damage to the roots.

A more satisfactory method for staking small trees or tall shrubs is to use two parallel stakes driven solidly at least 18 inches into firm soil about a foot beyond the planting hole on opposite sides of the plant. The height of the stakes after being driven into the ground should be approximately two-thirds that of the plant. The plant is then supported by wires (12-gauge) attached to both stakes and looped loosely around the trunk. A rubber hose length should be used to protect the trunk.

The most commonly used method is to fasten three guy wires to stakes that have been fixed in firm soil equal distance from the hole and from each other. It is absolutely essential that all three stakes be firmly fixed so that one or more of them will not pull out in high winds. The tops of the stakes are notched to hold the wire. The wire is then fastened two-thirds of the way up the trunk by a loose rubber hose covered loop. The other ends of all wires should be fastened equally tight to the stakes without putting a strain on the trunk. The wires should be firm but loose enough to allow slight movement of the plant. Your goal is simply to keep the plant from blowing over.

All staking should be removed within one year after planting. You may be able to remove stakes for fall planted trees by mid-spring. The tree should have become established in this period of time. Growth is actually reduced if the supports are left in place for long periods of time and some plants can become girdled by wires as the trunk increases in diameter.

If you have any questions or need additional information you can contact me at the County Extension office 706-779-5501.