

# Planting the Right Tree in the Right Place

The most common reason for tree health decline or for tree mutilation (topping) is because the wrong tree is planted in the wrong place. One of the most disturbing issues that I see quite often is when trees have to be removed or severely pruned because they are planted too close to structures, or a tree dies because it is the wrong species for the site planted in. Here are issues to consider when looking for a planting location:

- Where are the current physical structures (buildings, gazebo, garage, fence, etc.)?
- Are there Overhead Utilities, and how tall will the selected tree get...will there be a conflict?
- Where are the Underground utilities? For free underground locations services: "Call Before You Dig" call 811.
- Where are Sidewalks, pavement, landscaping brick, etc., and how wide can trunk of selected tree get?
- Are there plans for future developments, installing a pool, addition to home, etc.
- Make sure owners know where property lines and easements are. Property owners should know that trees planted in or near an easement can legally be pruned without permission by those that have rights to the easement, and that trees that are planted near property lines can become jointly owned by neighbors when the stump of the tree grows onto the neighboring property.

## Matching tree selection with site

- Make sure you select a species that is suitable for Hardiness Zone 6.
- Select a species that is suitable for the average moisture content of the soil. Is the planting site generally wet or dry?
- Select a tree that is fit for the amount of shade on the site. Shade tolerant trees (example: dogwood) do not do well in full sunlight.
- Is the soil acidic or alkaline? Don't try to change the ph of soil, but instead, select a species that does well for the soil type that you have.
- Select species or cultivars that are resistant to insects and disease.
- Trees should be selected depending on their maximum mature height, trunk diameter, and canopy width.
- Is the tree being planted for shade? Shade trees should be planted on the southeast, south, southwest, or west side of buildings.
- Plant conifers on the west to north side of buildings for wind reduction in the winter.
- What is the root habit of species you are selecting? You may want to select species that have few root problems.
- Choose trees that have strong limb structure and strength. Remember, the faster a tree grows, the weaker the wood will be, and more often you will have to pay to have it pruned.
- Is the tree being selected for beautification? If so, consider fruit, flowers, bark, and structural characteristics.

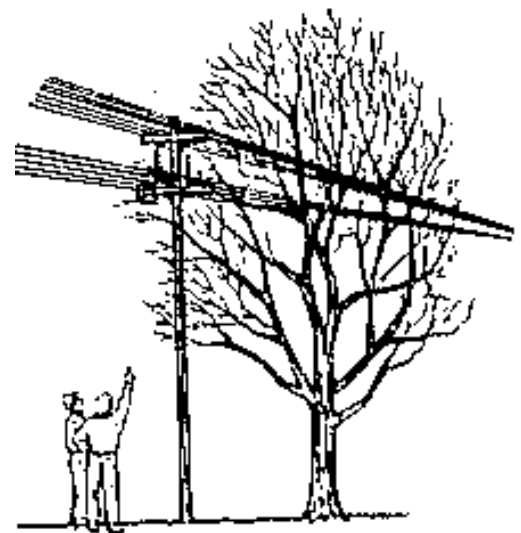
## Trees and utilities

If there are utilities in the area of the planting site, make sure that you choose the tree species and planting site that best fits with the location of existing overhead utility lines. Here are some recommendations that Vec-tren has made regarding planting trees near utilities.

Trees should be the following distances away from overhead utility lines according to the following sizes for trees at full maturity:

- 10 feet distance from power lines if trees get to 15 feet height at maturity.
- 20 feet distance from power lines if trees get to 25 feet height at maturity.
- 30 feet distance from power lines if trees get to 35 feet height at maturity or higher.

Again, make sure you know where underground utilities are. If a tree is planted over, or near underground utilities, and those utilities have to be replaced later, then you might lose the tree. Call 811 to get free locates done.



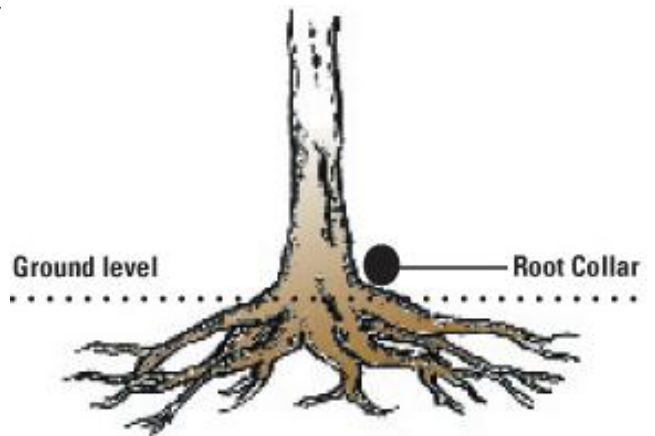
**Don't let this happen. Plant the right tree in the right place now so that trees do not have to be severely pruned or removed later.**

## Here are some helpful guidelines for successfully planting trees

- Remember to find where underground utilities are before you dig. The Call Before You Dig number is 811.
- Dig the hole two to three times width of root ball (or width of bare roots).
- Chop into sides of hole to loosen the edges of the hole. This will help prevent glazing of the soil at the edges.
- Not too shallow & Not too deep. Make sure to plant the root collar as close to the soil level as you can. You will probably need to find the root flare first, before you determine the depth of the hole. Most trees from the nursery that are balled & burlapped or in container have root collars that are buried. Plant the tree with the Root collar at ground level, and never below ground level.
- Remove top third of wire, rope and burlap. If rope is left on the ball and around the tree it may girdle the tree. Wire will restrict root growth, and the burlap can cause water to wick out of the soil and evaporate if left protruding from soil.
- Remove all tags or other items that may be attached to trees.
- No soil amendments! There are many landscapers, and nurserymen that still claim that soil amendments are good for trees, but in situations where only the hole is being amended and not the whole lawn they are wrong. Using the same soil that you dug out of the hole is the best practice for maximizing tree health. Using soil amendments should only be done when you are amending the entire potential root zone, which would be three times the width of the potential canopy.
- Compact by foot. Don't over compact. Lightly using your foot to press the soil down while only using your normal body weight should be just enough to compact the soil around the tree.
- Water evenly, enough to saturate soil, and compact lightly again.
- Cover with two to four inches of mulch. Less than two inches will cause the fresh soil to dry out faster and allow weeds to grow faster around the trees. More than four inches will prevent oxygen to get to roots, and can smother the roots. Too much mulch can also harbor rodents. Don't mound the mulch up around the trunk or the stem will be weakened. Pull the mulch about one inch from the root collar to allow the root collar to stay dry.
- Do not stake unless you are afraid someone will pull it down or if you think that mowers will hit it. If you do use tree stakes, remove tree stakes one year after planting.
- Only prune off dead limbs at time of planting. Pruning will not cause the tree to grow faster, or increase the health of the tree.

## Caring for a newly planted tree

- Water one inch of water per week during dry periods. This is equal to half a gallon of water per square foot for the planting area. Don't water more than once per week. Watering for a short time every day will only evaporate right off and will be \$ down the drain.
- Prune for structure and form. Prune off dead limbs, poorly structured limbs, rubbing limbs, and diseased limbs. Don't take too much off, and especially, **don't top the tree**. Let trees grow the way they are supposed to grow. Remember, if you have to top your trees, then they must not be the right tree for the right place.
- Replace mulch as needed. Don't place new mulch over old mulch. This could create a mounding effect and end up smothering the roots.



**DON'T TOP TREES!!!**



PROVIDED BY:  
CITY OF EVANSVILLE  
DEPARTMENT OF URBAN FORESTRY  
1000 OAK HILL RD.  
EVANSVILLE, IN 47711  
(812)436-5752