

The week ahead

TUESDAY HEALTHY LIVING

SPECIAL ISSUE: Everything you need to know about living with diabetes in an expanded section

WEDNESDAY TASTE

SOUTHERN CLASSIC: An ode to frothy coconut cake and a look at Fredericksburg baker and author Rebecca Rafter's latest cookbook

NEXT WEEK HOME

THE GOLDEN AGE: Thanksgiving tabletop decor ushers in warm fall tones from turkey tureens to cloth napkins

Today on dallasnews.com

Must-have tamales

Tell us: Where do you get your holiday tamales? We're rounding up the masters of masa for a guide to the best tamales in town. Let us know who makes you crazy for steamed corn husks by Nov. 12.

food@dallasnews.com



Plan ahead for dinner on Thanksgiving

Online: Get recipes and strategies for a perfect Thanksgiving meal. Start planning now, with our guide to what you can make ahead, what new recipes to add to the mix and more.

dallasnews.com/thanksgiving

HOME

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CHORES

Plant trees now to give them a head start on summer

By **RICK ROSEN**
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Many homeowners think spring when they think about planting trees. But gardening experts consider fall the best time to add trees to the landscape. Trees planted now get a head start on establishing roots before summer returns.

Tree roots (and those of other plants) grow whenever the temperature is roughly above 40 degrees. In mild winters, roots gain the strength they need to deal with summer. And, because their roots have been growing all fall and winter, trees planted now burst with growth when spring arrives.

Homeowners may worry that a hard freeze or extended subfreezing weather will kill or

damage trees planted in fall. It is a good idea to protect above-ground portions of recently planted trees and shrubs. Because the ground doesn't freeze in our area, the roots should be fine.

You can plant trees that are sold in pots or balled-and-burlapped specimens (a tree grown in the ground is dug up and its rootball wrapped in burlap) in fall. However, experts say to wait until winter to plant bare-root trees, including fruit and pecan trees. They should be dormant for best results.

If you're shopping for a tree with great fall color, you can see at the nursery exactly what color you'll get.

Once you've chosen a tree, what is the best way to plant it?

PROPER PLANTING

1 Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball. More important: Make sure the hole is no deeper than the top of the rootball. Planting the tree 1 to 3 inches above the level of the surrounding ground is best, since the tree may settle.

2 Place the tree on solid soil. Don't loosen the soil under the rootball, and don't add compost, bark or any other amendment. Lift and carry the tree by the rootball, not the trunk.

3 Backfill only with the soil you excavated for the hole.

4 Tamp down the soil around the rootball.

5 Water thoroughly to eliminate air pockets.

6 Use soil to build a 4-inch-tall berm around the edge of the hole. Add a 4- to 6-inch layer of mulch inside the ring, but never cover the root flare.

POST-PLANTING TIPS

The extension service recommends lightly watering the tree every day for a week. The second week, water every other day. The third week, water every third day. The fourth week, water once a week, if needed. (Check the soil with a finger to see if it needs watering.)

Don't fertilize the tree after you plant it. Spring is the time for that, and even then go light on fertilizer, because fertilizer can burn roots.

Staking the tree is considered a last resort. Some experts believe staking weakens a tree's ability to thrive on its own once the stakes are removed and also can damage the bark, making it easier for pests to infiltrate.

However, if the trunk is too weak to support itself, use two stakes, on opposite sides of the tree, and remove them after one year.

Source: Texas Cooperative Extension

TREE-PLANTING GUIDE

Get a free tree planting guide from the city of Dallas Urban Forest Advisory Committee. Pick one up in the Park Department, 6th floor at City Hall, 1500 Marilla St.; at the Dallas County Texas Cooperative Extension office, 10056 Marsh Lane Suite B-101; and four recreation centers: Beckley-Saner, 114 W. Hobson; Reverchon, 3505 Maple; Campbell Green, 16600 Park Hill Drive; and Kidd Springs, 711 W. Canty. The first copy, or as many as 10 for homeowner or community groups, is free. The committee requests \$1 donation for additional copies. Download the guide at www.dallastrees.org.



Photos by JUAN GARCIA/Staff Photographer

To transplant a containerized tree, city of Dallas arborist Steve Houser digs a hole twice the width of the rootball.



Remove twine or baling wire binding burlap around the rootball.



If a tree is rootbound when you remove it from its plastic pot, try to loosen the roots from their circular grip, even severing some, as demonstrated, to encourage lateral growth.



Maintaining a 2- to 4-inch layer of mulch keeps roots cool in summer. Never cover a tree's root flare, the juncture where the vertical trunk fans out, with soil or mulch.

Molasses, gluten will boost lawn

Wild asters are starting to take over my St. Augustine yard, and I was told there is nothing I can do. Do you have a suggestion?

J.F., Dallas

Kick up the fertility. That annual weed is a clear sign that soil health and plant nutrition are needed.

Put out dry molasses now at a rate of 20 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Use corn gluten meal at the same rate in the spring. Adding a 1/2-inch layer of compost would help end the problem. This is the perfect time to do the work.

I would like to know why fruit rots.

A.P., Fort Worth

When organic tissue gets old, microbes start to feed on it. That process is rot. Everything alive dies, and everything that dies rots.

This summer, we noticed the leaves turning brown on our Bradford pear tree. We followed your advice about exposing the tree's root flare and used your Sick Tree Treatment. The tree trunk is about 10 inches in circumference. We see no green on the tree. Should we cut it down or wait until spring to see whether it is alive?

B.W., Plano

No green is not a good sign. Planting a better type of tree probably is in order.

Is it possible to grow grapes from seed? I have seeds from German grapes and black Spanish grapes. On another note, I am switching to organic gardening and have made some of your formulas. I tried compost tea on one okra plant. The plant I fed with compost tea is 12 feet tall, while the others are about 6 to 8 feet tall.

D.H., Sherman

Yes, you can grow grapes from seed, but they probably will not be true to the parent plant and its grapes. Take stem cuttings from the original plant. Grow those. The new plants and grapes will be exactly the same.

Use an organic potting soil and place the seeds slightly beneath the soil surface. Treat the seeds with Garrett Juice before planting. (See Resources

ORGANIC ANSWERS



HOWARD GARRETT
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for instructions.)

I recently found grub worms in my flower bed. Should I try to get rid of them this late in the year?

W.S., Corinth

Make a fall application of organic fertilizer and don't worry about the grub worms.

Applying dry molasses at a rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet also would help.

RESOURCES

ONLINE: www.dirtdoctor.com for free organic-program handouts

RADIO: KSKY-AM (660), Saturday 11 a.m.-noon and Sunday 8-11 a.m. www.ksky.com.

MAIL: P.O. Box 140650, Dallas, TX 75214

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