

HELPFUL TREE HINTS

Courtesy of: San Antonio Water System

TREE SELECTION

Selecting the proper tree is crucial for the longevity and health of your tree. Below are several guidelines to follow to ensure successful tree selection:

- Always select a species native to or adapted to the region. The Rule of Thumb is to select a plant that originated within a 100-mile radius of the planting site. If you don't know whether a species is native to or adapted to the region, species lists are available from the Extension Service or the Texas Forest Service.
- Always select a plant that has branches at least halfway up the trunk and no more than one trunk.
- Always select a plant that has a large root ball or has been grown in an adequate sized container. Remember – roots are essential for plant life! The more roots, the greater the success for plant survival.

PLANTING AND PLANTING LOCATION

Follow these simple steps and trees will grow strong and healthy:

- Dig a hole or even simply till or spade an area bigger than the root ball. Wider is better.
- Never dig the hole deeper than the depth of the root ball.
- Always remove the twine or nylon and the burlap if a tree is balled and burlapped.
- Mix into the backfill a small amount of compost (<15%) and slow release fertilizer (8-10 oz.). Scientific research has demonstrated that the original soil is best for backfill.
- Mulch the top of the soil backfill with two (2) inches of woodchips or pine bark/ hardwood mulch in a three foot radius.
- Water in everything; never tamp down the soil. Stake only if really necessary.

For maximum energy savings and minimum maintenance costs, plant trees at the following locations:

- For trees which mature greater than 60 feet, plant a minimum 20 feet from a building and 40 feet apart

- For trees which mature between 30 and 60 feet, plant a minimum 15 feet from a building and 35 feet apart.
- For trees which mature less than 30 feet, plant a minimum 10 feet from a building and 15 feet apart.
- Plant trees no less than 15 feet from a driveway, 10 feet from a utility pole, and 30 feet from an intersection.
- Scientific research has demonstrated that two deciduous trees on both the east and west sides of a house provided the maximum energy savings.

TREE MAINTENANCE

For ease and minimal expense, tree maintenance consists of these 5 simple steps:

- 1. WATER:** Native trees seldom have to be watered after establishment. Whenever natural rainfall has been absent for four (4) or more weeks, water beneath a tree's canopy with 1 inch (2/3 cg/SF) of water.
- 2. MULCH:** Mulch with woodchips or pine bark whenever and wherever possible. A six-foot diameter mulched area is the minimum, but for maximum growth remove all the grass and mulch the entire yard.
- 3. FERTILIZER:** Fertilize at the dripline and beyond with 3-1-2 ratio slow release fertilizer once every three years.
- 4. PRUNE:** Prune every four to six years removing no more 1/4 of the canopy. Maintain a single trunk and leave 50% or more of the leaves in the lower canopy. Never top a tree.
- 5. PESTS:** Control pests only when biologically harmful to the tree. Always remember that healthy trees tolerate a small amount of infestation, so keep the trees healthy by adhering to the previous four. Always use the least toxic pesticide alternative first.

TREE ESTABLISHMENT WATER SCHEDULE

Recommendations are made assuming all the following horticultural best management practices have been followed:

- One (1) inch of compost should be incorporated into the soil or back fill.
- Planting holes are a minimum of twice the width of the root ball and have sloping sides
- The root ball is planted at the grade.
- Water the entire planting site until soil is saturated.
- Two (2) inches of hardwood chip or pine bark of similar substance has been placed evenly over the entire planting site.

ESTABLISHMENT WATER SCHEDULE

The following schedule applies when rainfall is absent. If normal rainfall occurs, you must reduce or eliminate watering during that portion of the Establishment or Maintenance Phase.

Frequency:

- 1st Month- water three (3) times a week over root ball only
- 2nd Month- water two (2) times a week over root ball only
- 3rd Month- water once (1) a week
- Next six months- water twice a month
- Next summer- water 1-2 times in March, April, May, June, July, August, September

Water Amount (per event):

- < 3 inch trunk – one (1) gallon per trunk inch
- < 3 inch trunk – two (2) gallons per trunk inch

Trees Planted in Winter – eliminate 1st Month schedule

MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE

- Native and adapted non-native plants that have been properly planted and established and grouped with similar water needs require little or no supplemental irrigation.
- If required, supplemental irrigation is recommended at the beginning and towards the end of a target plant species' growing season (growing season = March to October). Thirty (30) day events are preferred.
- When irrigation is necessary, water deeply until at least the first 4 inches of soil are saturated. Cycle and soak may be necessary to achieve this. However, the preferred methods of woody plant irrigation are drip, bubbler, soaker hose, and by hand.
- Annual applications of 1 inch of compost and 2 inches of mulch to the greatest extent possible over the root zone. Less turf and more mulch are always preferred whenever and wherever possible.