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PLANTING CONTAINER GROWN PLANTS

Container-grown plants have the benefit of being less prone to “transplant shock” than are other transplants such as bare root or even balled and burlapped plants; however, they are often pot-bound which means they have a mass of roots growing around the outside of the ball of potting media within the container. This is especially true of some of the smaller one to three gallon container plants.

It may seem to be counter intuitive but trees and shrubs will benefit from disturbing the roots before planting. There are many reasons for this, and surprisingly some of the harshest techniques result in the healthiest plants.

Container grown plants, especially those in the smaller sizes, often have serious root problems. Potbound plants exhibit circling root systems, which if not corrected become woodier and more troublesome the older they get. They can actually strangle the plant to death if not pruned prior to planting.

Everyone knows that pruning the top of a plant can encourage new vigorous growth. Likewise, pruning the older tough roots can induce new more flexible vigorous roots that will grow out into the existing soil faster. It is vital to make sure these new transplants are watered regularly during this time of new root establishment. Fall is actually the best time of year to plant, so remember if you plant this time of year keep the plants well watered throughout the first summer.

Another problem with container grown plants can be avoided during your root inspection. As you spread the roots out for inspection remove as much of the potting medium as possible. Take a water hose and gently rinse the loose material off the roots. If transplanted with the loose material left intact, it can continue to decay and create air pockets. It also will dry out

quicker than the surrounding soil causing drying around the existing rootball when the area around the plant may be wet enough. Once the loose material has been removed spread the roots laterally within the planting hole. Never dig a pot sized hole to place the new shrub or tree into. This is just like putting the plant in a new pot and will greatly increase future problems such as slow establishment and possibly early death of your plants.

The bottom line is playing a little rough with your plants can be a good thing for discovering and correcting potential problems. In a healthy, well watered plant, root pruning at transplant time will encourage vigorous new root growth and help the plant establish itself in the native soil much faster.

Walker County Forestry Planning Committee Tree Sale

Mark your calendars, the Walker County Forestry Planning Committee will once again be selling tree seedlings at the Wal-Mart Garden Center on Friday, March 3rd from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and on Saturday, March 4 from 8:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

In all, almost thirty species of both wildlife and ornamental trees will be available for \$1 each. Both bare root and containerized or plugged seedlings will be available. Selections on some species are limited and will be offered on a first come first served basis.