



## HORTICULTURAL SERIES

# TIMELY INFORMATION

## Agriculture & Natural Resources

EXTENSION HORTICULTURE, AUBURN UNIVERSITY, AL 36849-5639

### *Frequently Asked Questions Regarding TREES AND CONSTRUCTION IN ALABAMA*

#### **Why should we be concerned about saving existing trees?**

- **Aesthetics-** Trees look good and are pleasing attributes to many homes and/or developments.
- **Value-** Research has demonstrated that trees increase property value, sales and rental rates.
- **Savings-** Replacement trees cost money and labor. Well placed mature trees can provide significant energy savings.
- **Time-** Consider how long it will take for you to grow a mature tree to enjoy in your landscape.
- **It just makes sense!**

#### **Can all trees be saved?**

- No.  
However, it would be wise to determine if trees on your development property can be saved in an appropriate manner and in a way that adds value to your planned development.

#### **How do I determine which trees to save?**

- **Identification-** of tree species. This will provide information on native species, site characteristics and prospects for tree preservation. If most trees on a piece of property are undesirable species, there may be less need for active tree preservation.
- **Inventory-** number and size of trees by species. This may assist with letting you know some site characteristics such as site history, climate, soil situations, etc. You should also evaluate tree health at this time. If a large tree appears worth saving, but, upon inspection, has significant health problems, you may turn your attention to saving another tree or group of trees.
- **Location-** of trees, special or significant trees, structures, proposed structures, utilities, proposed utilities, and other site features. Place these sets of information on different sheets of tracing paper. This will help you with the next step.
- **Overlay-** the "layers" of trees, structures utilities, etc. Are trees threatened or otherwise impacted by development? What happens if you shift proposed structures around just a few feet? What if you move utilities a few feet? What happens if you significantly move structures and utilities? From what you can see, what ideas do you have about the potential for tree preservation? Even after you make adjustments there may be some trees impacted. If you wish to save those trees, there are other alternatives.

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES, AND TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY, COUNTY GOVERNING BODIES AND USDA COOPERATING

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

## **What actions do I need to take to save trees on the property I am developing?**

- Mark and protect the “must save” trees. These are the trees that you feel all measures must be taken to save.
- Preserve enough root area for each tree based on each inch of caliper of the "must save" trees. See ANR 814.
- Place orange construction fencing around this perimeter.
- Inform all persons who will work on or visit the property that this perimeter fencing is not to be compromised at any time.
- Contractually bind contractors to stay out of these perimeter zones. You may need to consult an attorney for this. Consider fines for personnel or the contractor that impact tree zones.
- Mulch the tree preservation area.
- Provide irrigation for the preservation area.
- Consult your architect concerning construction methods that may lessen soil impact and therefore tree root damage. Cantilever designs, pilings, outdoor living spaces, etc. are options.

## **Who should I involve in the tree preservation process?**

- Consult a tree specialist such as a certified arborist or a certified landscaper to assist with tree identification and assessment. Your County Extension Agent or County Forester may be able to provide technical assistance and educational publications to assist you in making decisions on small projects. A Landscape Designer or Architect will be helpful, especially when they are included from the beginning of the planning process.
- Be sure to contact your builder immediately. He or she will need to meet with your specialist to develop ways to save important trees.
- If you have employed an architect and/or engineer to develop your site design, tell them you want to save trees on site. They can offer innovative building solutions to help you make the most of your outdoor living space and the environmental resources you have on your site.
- Be sure you and your family are personally involved in the project. Make regular site visits and make sure trees are being preserved as instructed. Pay particular attention to damaged trunks and compacted or moved soil.

## **What if I've already begun work on the site?**

- Postpone work if possible to allow time for assessment.
- Take immediate action to lessen possible impacts.
- Consider securing the services of a professional to make quick decisions.
- Check with your contractor, architect, attorney, etc. to see what can be done now to save important or desired trees.
- It is important to take immediate action.

## **Web Resources to help you save trees**

Alabama Cooperative Extension System- [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)

Alabama Urban Forestry Association- [www.aufa.com](http://www.aufa.com)

International Society of Arboriculture- [www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)

Urban Forestry South- [www.urbanforestrysouth.org](http://www.urbanforestrysouth.org)

**Prepared by:** David West, County Extension Coordinator and Adjunct  
Assistant Professor [dwest@aces.edu](mailto:dwest@aces.edu)