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Advice to Grow By ... Ask Us!

THE REAL DIRT ABOUT BAREROOT PLANTS

By Nanette Londeree, Marin Master Gardener

It's the best time of year to shop for plants – that's right; December and January! It's the time of year that nurseries and garden centers bareroot plants – ones that are dormant plants with all soil removed. They're light, transportable and easy to handle and plant.

You can get the best selection on fruit and other types of trees, berries, artichokes and asparagus, roses and other flowers shrubs. They're available for earlier planting, allowing for a slower and better-paced transition into your garden as the season ramps up. Buy early in the season, before the plants leaf out to conserve the plant's energy. Inspect the plant – they should be plump with no wrinkles and have a good color. The root system should be sturdy and undamaged, not dry or mushy and the entire plant should be free from damage and obvious signs of disease. Some suppliers apply a thin coat of paraffin to the plant to reduce moisture loss; plants treated with paraffin have to grow through that wax, which may slow the development of new buds. Make sure your plants have tags so that you can properly identify them before they leaf out.



Shopping by mail order (catalogs / internet) provides the greatest overall selection, often featuring exciting new varieties not widely available. While you can't inspect before purchase, as long as you buy from reputable sources that guarantee safe arrival and successful growth, there's little risk.

In addition to the best selection, there is generally less handling so plants are likely to be fresher and better quality. As specialists, the supplier can provide top quality and you get a money-back guarantee – they are ready, willing and able to stand behind the quality of their product. You can also get reliable information and expert advice.

Many times we want to support our local businesses and that's a good thing. You can select exactly the plant you want. Go into this purchase in the same way you would for anything else – as an educated shopper. Remember the wise words – "If it looks too good to be true, it probably is."