



Landscape Trees



This is the first article in a series about landscape trees. This article is about selecting the site. Future articles will explore selecting the tree species to plant, buying the tree at a nursery, planting the tree, and tree maintenance after planting.

Trees planted around your home will provide many benefits including conserving energy by shading buildings and paved surfaces, filtering airborne pollutants, removing atmospheric carbon dioxide, reducing storm water runoff, increasing the value of our homes, and enhancing the environment for wildlife.

In order to derive maximum benefits from a landscape tree, careful planning in advance of planting is a must. First determine the function of a tree. Is it for shade, windbreak, privacy, aesthetics, or architectural element? It is important to match the site with the intended purpose of the planting. Then do an evaluation of the potential planting site which should include determining the available space for roots and canopy, and noting the location of overhead or underground utilities. The site should have enough space for the tree at maturity. Trees too large for the site can lead to future increased maintenance cost and possibly ruin the desired effect. When planning for a tree, consider the mature tree height and the available space overhead and underground. Inappropriate trees planted under utility lines require annual pruning, which often leads to an unnatural shape, structural weakness, and greater stress that increases susceptibility to disease and insect invasion. Avoid placing a tree where flower petals, fruit, and leaf or bark litter falls on walk-ways or in ponds or pools. Trees placed to shade large areas of pavement reduce reflective heat making patios, walkways and streets cooler. Remember large trees have wide growing root systems and should be placed at least 15' away from a permanent structure.

Underground utilities should be located prior to tree planting. Locate underground lines by requesting an Underground Service Alert (USA) by calling 1-800-227-2600. This simple and free service ensures safety for the excavator and homeowner, and prevents damage to underground utilities. Although many roots and lines exist underground without incident, be aware that many tree roots extend over twice the diameter of the canopy. Root damage can occur during digging which may affect a tree's health.

Submitted by Nancy Mulligan, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County