

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

Tree Planting Rules

One of the more impressive displays at garden centers is their selection of trees. Maybe it's spurred your tree planting project along? If so, consider these tips for the best success.

Start with the right tree. Too many selections end up with unwanted fruit production or disease/insect pressures that you never thought of. Check out a recommended plants resource, available at <http://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/index.html> . If your garden store has their own nurseryman, they are a great source of information as well.

Keep trees well-watered and in a shady location prior to planting. Never remove by grabbing the trunk. Always lift by the root ball or pot. If there are wires/labels/cords on the tree that may cause girdling, remove them. Finally, remove just enough soil to locate the root flare.

A properly sized hole is important. Dig holes to a depth that allows it to sit slightly above nursery level on solid ground (not fill dirt). Avoid digging too deep. Planting width is also very important and should end up being three times the width of the root ball. Want to help tree roots spread faster? Loosen soil outside the hole so it is five times the diameter of the root ball.

Once the hole is in place, remove all containers from the root ball. This can be tough! Some wire baskets can't be removed, but they should be cut back as much as possible and rolled in to the hole. Anything you can remove should be. If roots have been circling around in the container, cut them and fluff them out so they do not continue growing so that they circle inside the hole and become girdling roots later in the life of the tree.

Backfill the hole with the same soil that was removed. No amendments or fertilizer necessary. Add water as you fill to ensure good root to soil contact and prevent air pockets.

Leaf buds on the tree release hormones that encourage root growth. To encourage as much root growth as possible, don't cut back the branches after planting unless they are rubbing or damaged.

Water deeply and then once a week for the first season (if we don't get enough rain). Mulching will help with water retention (and reduce competition) when added to a depth of two to four inches. It should cover an area two to three times the diameter of the root ball.

Don't stake the tree unless absolutely necessary. Unstaked trees tend to establish more quickly and grow faster if they are not staked. Movement is necessary to strengthen the trunk.

Alternative Corn N Sources/Timing

Thinking about other nitrogen (N) sources for corn? Some basics...

Differing N sources are agronomically equivalent when applied correctly.

N uptake of current corn hybrids tends to extend later in to the growing season, providing a bigger window for side-dress N applications.

Make sure you get 30 pounds of N up front so the crop isn't stunted from the start.

Sidedress applications by V5-V8 are a good goal.

Split-applied N can provide additional benefits including higher nitrogen use efficiency and reduced N loss potential for some soils.

When sidedressing urea or UAN on the surface, unless a rain is forecast to move N in to the soil, consider the use of a urease inhibitor to reduce the risk of N volatilization.

Injecting fertilizer is another alternative to manage the risk of N volatilization or tie-up.