Lessons are learned when storms strike. One lesson that is learned is where to place trees properly in the landscape. Damage to life and property can be minimized if thought is given to mature tree size at planting time.

Successful tree and shrub planting requires knowledge of growth characteristics, site requirements and intended landscape function of each selected species. Landscape trees and shrubs are not difficult to plant, but proper species selection and planting techniques are necessary to ensure success.

**Planting Locations**

The selection of planting locations is one of the most critical decisions made during the planting process. If a location is selected that will eventually cause the plant to have to be removed, then the planting was a failure. Specific items to consider are overhead and underground utilities, future construction sites, and the mature size of the plant. The mature size of a plant must be considered when selecting planting locations. Trees often have to be removed because they have grown too large for the site. Large landscape sized trees should be planted a minimum of 15 to 20 feet away from buildings or other obstructions. Overhead and underground utilities must be considered in order to avoid potential conflicts. Large trees should be planted a minimum of 20 to 25 feet from overhead power lines. Shrubs should be planted a minimum of 5 feet away from any potential conflict. These distances are minimums and greater distances would be preferable in most cases. When selecting your planting location it is also necessary to consider the plant's requirements to grow and survive, such as exposure to sunlight and soil drainage needs.

**Design**

Generally speaking, landscape design is a matter of personal taste. Many full service nurseries offer professional landscape design help as a part of their tree planting services. There are also certified landscape architects that can help you design a landscape to fit your needs.

**Conflicts With Utilities**

When deciding what type of tree to plant, remember to look up and look down to determine where the tree will be located in relation to overhead and underground utility lines. Overhead lines can be either electric, telephone, or cable television.
Underground lines include these three plus water, sewer, and natural gas. The location of these lines should have a direct impact on your tree and planting site selection. The ultimate mature height of a tree to be planted must be within the available overhead growing space. Just as important, the soil area must be large enough to accommodate the particular rooting habits and ultimate trunk diameter of the tree. Proper tree and site selection will provide trouble-free beauty and pleasure for years to come.

The biggest danger to underground lines occurs during planting. Before you plant, make sure that you are aware of the locations of any underground utilities. Most communities now offer a "one call" service to locate underground utilities. In many instances this is a requirement of city or state law. Never assume that these utility lines are buried deeper than you plan to dig. In some cases utility lines are very close to the surface.

**Things to Consider**

Here are some items to consider when making decisions about tree selection and placement:

Consider your neighbor's view and their existing plantings. Try not to be in conflict.

Plant large trees at least 20 feet away from the house for proper root development and to minimize damage to the house or building.

Use smaller trees to "frame" your home. Remember to plan for shrubs if you so desire.

When planting in the public right of way, contact your local municipal offices. Some cities require a planting permit to plant in this area. This allows better control over the kinds and sizes of trees that are planted.

Smaller trees can be used where growing space is limited. This is particularly true in some older sections of most towns were lot sizes are smaller. Smaller trees can provide useable shade.

Evergreens can be used on the west or north side of the house for wind protection. Be sure not to plant too close to the house. Remember that evergreens provide shade all year. Shading the drive with evergreens will not allow sunlight to penetrate to help melt snow and ice.

Plant deciduous (autumn leaf-dropping) trees on the south or west side of the house to cool in the summer and allow sun to enter the house in the winter.
Remember that careful planning prior to planting will help you to be sure that the right tree is planted in the right place. Proper tree selection and placement will enhance your property value and prevent costly maintenance trimming and damage to your home. Good landscaping utilizes shrubs and low-growing trees that are compatible with utility lines so they will not create public safety hazards, cause service interruptions or require severe pruning.

**Additional Information**

For more information contact your local University of Nebraska County Extension Office or visit the Nebraska Forest Service Community Forestry web site ([http://www.nfs.unl.edu](http://www.nfs.unl.edu)).