

# Tree Selection & Placement



## Storm Damage Series

#7

Lessons are learned when storms strike. One lesson is where to place trees properly in the landscape. Damage to life and property can be minimized if mature tree size is considered when selecting a tree.

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

### Planting Locations

Selecting a planting location is a critical decision. Too often trees are removed because they have grown too large for the site. Specific items

to consider are overhead and underground utilities, future construction sites and the mature size of the tree.

Plant large landscape trees at least 20 feet from buildings or other obstructions and 25 feet from overhead power lines. Plant shrubs at least 5 feet from any potential conflicts. These are minimum requirements and greater distances are preferable in most cases.

When choosing a planting site, also consider the tree's requirements to grow and survive, such as exposure to sunlight and soil drainage.

### Conflicts with Utilities

When deciding which type of tree to plant, remember to look up and look down to determine where the



A landscape designer will help select trees, shrubs and plants that meet your needs and are appropriate for the available space.

tree will be located in relation to overhead and underground utility lines. Overhead lines may be for electricity, telephone or cable television. Underground lines include those mentioned previously plus water, sewer and natural gas. The location of these lines should have a direct impact on the tree and planting site selection.



Plant large landscape trees at least 20 feet from buildings and 25 feet from overhead power lines. The location of underground utilities is another key consideration when selecting a planting site.

Most communities offer a free "one call" service to locate underground lines. In most cases this is required by city or state law. Never assume that utility lines are buried deeper than you plan to dig. In some cases they are very close to the surface.

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 tree's roots and eventual trunk diameter. Proper tree and site selection will provide trouble-free beauty and pleasure for years to come.

## Design

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

## Things to Consider

Here are some things to keep in mind when selecting and planting trees:

- **Consider your neighbors' view and their existing plantings.** Try not to be in conflict.

- **Plant large trees at least 20 feet from a building** to allow proper root development and to minimize potential damage to the building.
- **Use smaller trees to frame your home.** Also consider shrubs—they will add beauty and shade to your landscape.
- **Contact local municipal offices when planting in the public right-of-way.** Some cities require a permit to plant in this area. This allows better control over the types and sizes of trees that are planted.
- **Plant smaller trees where growing space is limited.** This is particularly true in older sections of towns with smaller lot sizes. Smaller trees can provide useable shade.

trees too close to the house. Remember that evergreens provide shade all year. Shading a driveway with evergreens will prevent sunlight from penetrating in the winter to help melt snow and ice.

- **Plant deciduous (autumn leaf-dropping) trees on the south or west sides of your home** to help cool it in the summer and warm it in the winter.

## Plan Carefully

Careful planning prior to planting will help ensure 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.

- **Use evergreens for wind protection on the west or north sides of the house.** Don't plant

*Small trees and shrubs can be used to frame the home and provide shade and added interest to the landscape.*

*This series is based on a previous storm damage series researched and written by David Mooter.*



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