K-STATE Research and Extension | Meadowlark District

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Tree Planting in the Fall

While spring is typically thought of as 'planting season' for most of our lawn and garden plants, trees are definitely one of those that can thrive when planted in the fall. Unlike fall, when soils could be cold and saturated (resulting in oxygen levels so low that root growth is inhibited), the warm and moist soils associated with fall actually *encourage* root growth. That means that the tree becomes established well before a spring-planted tree making it better able to withstand summer stresses.

Because we are planting in to drier soils, some special care is required for fall plantings. Tree roots are actively growing even though the top is dormant, so make sure the soil stays moist but not soggy. This may require watering not only in the fall but also during the winter months if we experience warm spells that dry the soil. Consider a mulch layer as well to help minimize moisture loss and slow soil cooling so root growth continues as long as possible. If planting evergreens, do so as early in the fall as you can since they need at least six weeks before the ground freezes for the roots to become established.

Fall planting isn't for every species!! Some trees do not produce significant root growth during the fall and are better planted in the spring. These include beech, birch, redbud, magnolia, tulip poplar, willow oak, scarlet oak, black oak, willows, and dogwood.

If you are considering a fall planting, don't forget to consider seedlings from the Kansas Forest Service Conservation Tree Planting Program. The fall ordering season runs through October 13th. Pick up an order form and price list from your District Extension Office or visit www.kansasforests.org .

If by chance you miss the fall planting window, the Conservation Tree Planting Program has an even wider array of trees and shrubs available during their spring ordering season! Orders are taken from December through early March with seedling distribution starting in mid-March. Visit the website above or contact a District Office for ordering information and a price sheet. Want to determine what trees or shrubs might fit best on your property? The website even has a tree suitability tool for your use as well!