

Tree Talk

Plant a Tree Today

The months of April and May are perfect for planting trees.

The soils and temperatures are warming up, frequent rains are possible, and the nurseries have a lot of selection to choose from. When heading out to look at trees, you will mostly find potted trees (trees that are grown in various size pots) and bare root trees (trees that are dormant and have their roots exposed).

Generally, bare root trees will be less expensive as they are much easier to handle and maintain than potted trees. Bare root trees will also have less root related problems after they are planted, but they are only available for a short period of time in the spring.

Trees that are purchased in pots are available throughout the growing season. Most nurseries will get shipments of these trees throughout the summer, which makes requesting certain species easier. When planting potted trees, make sure to eliminate any circling or girdling roots. If a tree is left in a pot for too long, the roots will eventually hit the side of the pot and start going in circles. If these roots are not dealt with before planting, they will continue to grow in that direction and tree mortality may occur years after planting.

- Plant your trees at the right depth. The top most root of any tree must be right beneath the surface of the soil, no deeper.
- Protect the lower trunk of your tree from weed eaters and lawnmowers. Damage from this equipment will slowly kill your tree.
- Make sure to water your tree for the first few years for optimal growth. Water at least twice a week unless we are receiving soaking rains.
- Stake your tree only if they won't stand up straight on a calm day. If you need to stake a tree, remove the stakes after 1 year.

Trimming your new tree for the first 10 years is extremely important. Large growing shade trees such as Hackberry, Bur Oak, Maples and Honeylocust need a single central leader for optimal growth; a single stem should be identifiable from the ground all the way up to the top of the tree. Trim out double or triple leaders.

When purchasing a tree, plant something different than your neighbors. In order to avoid disease and insect epidemics in the future, we should avoid overplanting any one species of tree such as Autumn Blaze maple or Colorado Blue spruce and instead buy under-planted species like, Stately Manor Coffeetree or Autumn Gold Gingko.

Please contact me for additional information or questions at forestry@aberdeen.sd.us or 626-7015

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