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For immediate release

Hey! Don't Just Walk Away Post-Planting Care for Trees

Congratulations! You did your research, bought the right tree for the right location, and planted it properly. Too often, however, homeowners forget about their new addition to the landscape as soon as they put their tools away. Post-planting care is absolutely required if your investment in a shade or ornamental tree is to grow for years to come.

Water

For at least one to two years after planting, trees should receive about 1 inch of water per week during the growing season. During hot and dry weather, supplemental irrigation is essential for tree establishment. A note of caution, however: excessive water can be as much of a problem and probably kills more plants than does a water deficiency. To help determine when watering is needed, plant a drought-indicator plant in the rootball of the tree. Plants such as impatiens, coleus and ajuga wilt dramatically. If these plants are planted into the rootball of the tree, the tree can be watered whenever the indicator plant has been in shade for at least one hour and is still wilted.

Grass and weeds

It is best to remove as much grass and weeds from around the newly planted tree as possible. Grass and weed roots will compete with the tree's roots for water, oxygen and nutrients in the soil. Replace removed grass and weeds with wood chips or bark mulch.

Wood chips/Bark mulch

Mulch should be maintained for at least a year at a depth of 2 to 4 inches. In addition to helping to maintain moisture and reducing competition from weeds and grass, mulches may reduce the possibility of lawn mower damage. Caution: Do not mulch right up to the tree's trunk. Leave a buffer zone of 4 to 6 inches. Mulch against the trunk can create an environment favorable to fungi.

Guying and staking

Guys or stakes should only be used when necessary, such as when roots are not solid in the planting hole or where the tree could be dislodged by high winds. In most instances, the weight of the rootball is sufficient to hold the tree in place, assuming it was properly planted. Guys or stakes should be secured to the tree using a wire through a hose and attaching the guy or stake wires at that point. Normal attachment is at two-thirds the height of the tree. To avoid girdling the tree stem, guys and stakes should be removed after one year or earlier if the wire causes problems.

Hire a tree care professional

The best advice is to hire a tree care professional with the experience, expertise and equipment to safely plant any size tree. Require proof of liability insurance. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), a 68-year-old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. It has more than 2,000 member companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance. An easy way to find a tree care service provider in your area is to use the "Locate Your Local TCIA Member Companies" program. You can use this service by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a ZIP code search on the TCIA Web site, www.treecareindustry.org. *If you would like additional information or digital photos, please contact Garvin@treecareindustry.org*