



Kansas State University Cooperative Extension Office
206 N. Griffith, Suite A
El Dorado, Kansas 67042

THE GRAPEVINE

March 19th, 2020

Larry Crouse

Extension Horticulture Agent

TEN RULES FOR PLANTING TREES

Before you begin spring landscaping, here are some tips on planting trees.

1. Select the right tree for the site. To avoid serious problems, choose trees that are adapted to your location. Consider whether the tree produces nuisance fruit or if there are disease-resistant varieties available.
2. Keep the tree watered well and in a shady location until planting. When moving the tree, lift it by the root ball or pot and not by the trunk.
3. Before planting, remove all wires, labels, cords or anything else tied to the plant. If left on, they may eventually girdle the branch to which they are attached. The root flare (point where trunk and roots meet) should be visible. If it isn't, remove enough soil before planting so that it is.
4. Dig a proper hole. Make the hole deep enough so that the tree sits slightly above nursery level. Plant the tree on solid ground, not fill dirt. In other words, don't dig the hole too deep and then add soil back to the hole before placing the tree. The width of the planting hole is very important. It should be three times the width of the root ball. Loosening the soil outside the hole so it is five times the diameter of the root ball will allow the tree to spread its roots faster.
5. Remove all containers from the root ball. Cut away plastic and peat pots; roll burlap and wire baskets back into the hole, cutting as much of the excess away as possible. If you can remove the wire basket without disturbing the root ball, do it. If roots have been circling around in the container, cut them and fluff them out so they do not continue growing so that they circle inside the hole and become girdling roots later in the life of the tree.
6. Backfill the hole with the same soil that was removed. Make sure the soil that goes back is loosened - no clods or clumps. Add water as you fill for good root to soil contact. There's no need to fertilize at planting.
7. Don't cut back the branches of a tree after planting except those that are rubbing or damaged. The leaf buds release a hormone that encourages root growth. If the tree is cut back, the reduced number of leaf buds results in less hormone released and fewer roots being formed.
8. Water the tree thoroughly and then once a week the first season if there's a lack rainfall.
9. Mulch around the tree. Mulch should be 2 to 4 inches deep and cover an area two to three times the diameter of the root ball. Mulching reduces competition from other plants, conserves moisture and keeps soil temperature closer to what the plants' roots prefer.
10. Stake only when necessary. Trees will establish more quickly and grow faster if they are not staked. However, larger trees or those in windy locations may need to be staked the first year. Movement is necessary for the trunk to become strong. Staking should be designed to limit movement of the root ball rather than immobilize the trunk.

Managing Turf in Shade

Turfgrasses differ in their capacity to grow in shade. Among Kansas turfgrasses, tall fescue is the best adapted to shade though it isn't all that good. Although the fine fescues (i.e., creeping red, chewings, hard and sheep fescues) have better shade tolerance, they lack heat tolerance and typically decline during hot Kansas summers. The warm-season grasses have poorer shade tolerance than cool-season grasses. Where shade is too heavy for fescue, there are other courses of action. The most obvious but often impractical option is to either remove trees, or to prune limbs and thin the tree canopies. Grass will do better under openly spaced trees than under closely spaced trees. Pruned limbs and thinned





canopies will allow more sunlight to directly reach the turfgrass. If possible, raise the mowing height in the shade to compensate for the more upright growth of the leaves, and to provide more leaf area for photosynthesis. The thin, weak turf in the shade may tempt you to fertilize more. Remember the problem is lack of light, not lack of fertility. Too much nitrogen in the spring causes the plant to grow faster and may result in weak plants. The nitrogen rate for shaded grass should be cut back to at least half of that for grass in full sun. Late fall fertilization after tree leaves have fallen, on the other hand, is important for shaded cool-season turfgrasses and should be applied at a full rate. Irrigate infrequently but deeply. Light, frequent irrigation may encourage tree feeder-roots to stay near the surface, which increases competition between the trees and the turf. Restrict traffic in the shade. Another option is to reseed areas with heavy shade each fall. The turf will look good during the fall and spring and then likely fall apart when the stresses of summer hit. None of these options is very attractive. This is one of those problems in which there is not a good answer. Many times, the best choice for shaded areas is switch from a turfgrass to a more shade-tolerant plant. For example, periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) is much more shade tolerant than any turfgrass adapted to our area. Another option is simply to mulch the area where turf doesn't grow well. The trees will love the cool, moist soil and the absence of competition. If you are choosing a tree for an established yard consider a Honeylocust. They have a fairly loose canopy that throws a filtered shade that is more conducive to establishing turf.

Brown Coloration on Junipers

Certain eastern redcedar and various other junipers are showing a brownish cast when viewed from a distance. This may be the male flowers. Male flowers are on the tips of the leaves and look somewhat like a cross between a miniature hand grenade and a pinecone. Shaking the branches on dry days will often result in a cloud of pollen being released. Most junipers are dioecious, meaning they have both male and female plants. About half the junipers (the males) will have this coloration. The female flowers are much less obvious. If you are concerned about this brown coloration, check the plants to ensure the male flowers are the cause. If they are, this is normal and will fade with time.

Controlling Weeds in Asparagus Beds

The best time to control weeds in asparagus is early spring before the asparagus emerges. A light tilling (or hoeing) that is shallow enough to avoid the crowns will eliminate existing weeds. Many gardeners like to mix in organic matter during the same operation. Herbicides can be used before asparagus emerges as well. Glyphosate (Roundup, Killzall) will kill weeds that are actively growing, and the preemergence herbicide trifluralin can be used to kill weed seeds as they germinate. Trifluralin is found in several products, but not all of them list asparagus on the label. Those that do have asparagus on the label include Miracle-Gro Weed Preventer Granules and Monterey Vegetable and Ornamental Weeder. Mulch can also be used to keep weeds from invading. No herbicides can be used during harvest. After the harvest season is past and the asparagus starts to regrow, options are limited. Products that contain sethoxydim can be applied to asparagus to kill annual grassy weeds such as crabgrass. Sethoxydim has no effect on broadleaves including asparagus. Two sethoxydim products available to homeowners and labeled for asparagus are Monterey Grass Getter and Hi-Yield Grass Killer. With broadleaves, the only option is to pull them and look forward to next year.

Larry E. Crouse
Butler County Horticulture Agent
K-State Research & Extension
206 N Griffith, Suite A
El Dorado, KS 67042
(316)321-9660
lcrouse@ksu.edu

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact Charlene Miller, KSRE - Butler Co. Director, 316-321-9660

