

## **SELECTING A TREE FOR YOUR LANDSCAPE**

*Elaine Cameron*

*Angelina Master Gardener*

Winter is the ideal time to plant trees in East Texas since there is time for roots to be established before the heat of summer.

Selecting the tree to plant is based on several factors. First, consider the purpose for planting a tree, whether it is for shade or screening, or for ornamentation. The density of foliage and whether the tree is an evergreen or deciduous determines the amount of shading or screening. There are varied ornamental qualities, such as colorful flowers or fruit, interesting foliage, fall color, textures of bark, and winter foliage.

Think about the mature size of trees and where you plan to plant them. Tall trees such as oak, sycamore and magnolia are attractive with a two-story building. For one-story homes choose trees that reach a maximum height of 35 feet for an attractive balance. Shape is also important in choosing trees for shade or ornamentation.

The planting site will determine your selection of an appropriate tree. Consider the size of the site as determined by distance from buildings, streets, driveways, sidewalks utility poles and wires. Other site characteristics are full sun or shaded, wet or dry, and soil type.

Finally, think about how much maintenance the tree will need. Find out if is susceptible to disease or insects. Is the wood soft or brittle and easily damaged by wind? Does the tree shed messy fruit, or large amounts of small twigs or seedpods?

Once you have decided which trees you will plant it is time to purchase a tree. Trees are sold at nurseries as bare-root, balled-and-burlapped (B & B), or container-grown.

Bare root trees have had the soil washed away and are packed in moist sawdust. Bare root trees must be planted in winter while they are dormant. Take care to not let the roots dry out.

B & B trees have their roots contained in a soil ball within a burlap wrap, and can be planted anytime during the year. Choose a B & B tree that has a sound root ball and has not dried out.

Container grown trees may be planted all year long. Check roots on container grown plants for tight coiling in the pot. When planting container trees that have coiled roots split the lower half of the root system and horizontally spread the roots, to encourage lateral growth and prevent root strangulation. If roots are circling on the soil surface or coming out the drain holes, choose another tree.

Choose a tree that has a good shape without thin spots, broken limbs, broken spots in the bark or signs of insects or disease. According to Dr. Bill Welch, of Texas A & M. “When buying plants, the biggest is not always the best. The medium to small sized (4 to 6 feet) usually become established faster and will become effective in the landscape more quickly than the large sizes.”

For lists of trees for our area and “How to Plant a Tree” call or visit the Angelina County Extension office, 634-6414.