

Now's the time to plant pecan trees

By Danny Mullins
December 30, 2001

The pecan is well adapted to our area, making a beautiful large shade tree. It also produces nuts for home, if the recommended varieties are planted.

Questions concerning the establishment of pecan trees in the landscape are frequent, especially at this time of year. Here are some of the most common questions and their answers.

Q: What varieties of pecans do you recommend?

A: Only those that show some real resistance to disease problems are recommended for planting by homeowners. Select grafted trees of Desirable, Curtis, Elliott, Moreland or Stuart varieties.

Q: When is the best time to plant?

A: Obtain and plant trees during the winter; December through February.

Q: What size trees should I purchase?

A: Three to six feet tall. Larger trees are more difficult to transplant

Q How far apart should trees be spaced?

A: Because pecans become large trees, give them plenty of room to grow. The distance between trees should be approximately 60 feet because mature trees are quite large. Commercial producers sometimes use a closer spacing, primarily because they are using varieties that will bear at an earlier age. But most of those varieties do not have good disease resistance and still require pesticide spray at times. Home owners will not have the needed equipment to spray a large pecan tree and the drift from such sprays would not be desirable around your home, so these varieties aren't recommended for home plantings.

Q: What is the planting procedure?

A: One of the keys to survival of a pecan trees is not allowing the root system to dry out before, during, or after transplanting.

Other important steps:

- The planting hole should be 18 to 24 inches wide and only as deep as the root system.
- Spread the roots so they are not matted together, thus allowing for normal growth and development.
- The planting depth is critical. Place at such a depth that the uppermost root is at or near the soil surface.
- Excessively deep planting of pecan trees can result in death.
- Gradually add soil and continue to carefully spread out roots as the filling procedure continues, until the

pecan tree planting methods now is the time to plant

hole is filled. Water the soil and remove air pockets and firm the soil around the root system.

- Construct a water ring around the base of the tree that is approximately three feet across and four inches high. Fill the ring with water after transplanting has been completed. Regular watering will be required for a period of at least six months or until the young tree is well established.

Q: Should I put peat moss or manure in the planting hole?

A: No, plant in your native soil without amendments.

Q: Should I put peat moss or manure in the planting hole?

A: No, plant in your native soil without amendments.

Q: Should I apply fertilizer when the trees are planted?

A: No, wait until May of the first year after planting.

Q: Should I mulch around the trees?

A: A two to three inch deep layer of coarse mulch would be beneficial. In addition to conserving moisture, mulches help reduce grass and weed competition.

Note: The branches of pecan trees are sometimes brittle, resulting in occasional falling branches. Locate trees so that, at maturity, limbs do not extend over the roof of structures or over parking areas. Remember that pecan trees are large at maturity, with branches spreading 60 feet or so from the trunk. Also, because of the brittle limbs and falling nuts, it's best not to plant them where they will be a hazard to the house or driveway.

Daniel E. Mullins is an Extension Agent in the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Santa Rosa County.