

Planting and transplanting trees and shrubs

Now that Christmas is over and as we head toward a New Year, you may be considering projects in your landscape. The early winter months are a great time to plant or replant shrubs and trees. In today's article I'll share answers to email questions related to planting and transplanting woody ornamentals.

Q. I've recently purchased forty holly plants for a hedge. Should I put any peat moss or any other additions into each hole when I plant them? Do you have any other pointers in planting these shrubs?

A. There is no need to add any soil amendments in the individual planting holes. Research all over the country, including Florida, has shown no real advantage to adding soil amendments (compost, peat moss, manure, etc.) in the planting hole. The most important factors are to make sure to not plant the plants too deep. Dig a shallow planting hole as wide as possible. The depth of the hole should be slightly less than the height of the root ball. Next, find the point where the top-most main root emerges from the plant's trunk. Because many plants will already be too deep in the container, you may have to remove the upper most potting mix before finding one or more main roots. The main roots I'm referring to will be comparable in size to some of the plant's limbs in diameter. If all you're finding at the surface are very small fibrous roots, you'll have to keep digging until you uncover at least one of the main roots. Then set the plant in the ground so the main root is at the soil surface after the plant has been planted. It's better to err on planting the plant too shallow verses too deep.

Q. I need to dig up and move a few shrubs and a small tree that were planted too close to the house a few years ago. Can I do this now or should I wait until spring.

A. Now is a great time to transplant trees and shrubs. It's important to minimize the time they are out of the ground. It's best to have the new holes already prepared. Do not plant the plants any deeper than they were originally planted. In other words, the top of the root ball should be level with the surrounding grade after they are in the ground. Make sure to water adequately - keep the root ball moist and don't let it dry out excessively. Supplemental watering should continue well into the following growing season.

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