

## Think before you plant

As the warm weather arrives and you begin to plan your spring plantings if trees are in your plan keep in mind where you are going to plant them before you purchase them. Planting trees in the right place is essential for them to maintain their health. All trees have their own requirements for growth, such as light, soils and amount of space, depending on the species. Each tree also has a different growth habit such as mature height and width and shape. It is important to find out all of this information before you plant the tree.

Soils are probably the most important factor to consider when choosing which tree to plant. You should know if your soils are really sandy or if they are more of a loam. Do they hold water for a while after it rains or when the rain stops does the ground quickly dry out. Are the soils acidic or are they more neutral. All of these will affect what you should plant. It is a good idea to get a soil test if you are unsure of what you have. This will let you know the acidity of the soils as well as if there are any nutrient deficiencies that need to be addressed for the trees to be healthy.

Where on the property you plan to plant the trees also makes a difference. One example would be if you wanted to plant sugar maples. Sugar maples are extremely susceptible to salt damage. If your property is along a major route that gets a lot of salt in the winter, planting a sugar maple along the road would be asking for failure. This tree would be better planted away from the street where the salt cannot get to it. A more appropriate tree in this situation would be an ash, white oak or blue spruce which are all species more tolerant of salt.

Another thought is to remember where your power lines are and be very careful what you plant underneath it, if anything at all is planted. Small trees and shrubs that get no more than 10 to 15 feet tall such as dogwood or northern arrowwood would be your best option for planting underneath a powerline. Keep in mind that even if you plant a tree that grows eighty feet in height twenty or more feet back from the powerlines, the branches may spread thirty feet out from the trunk which may be right where the powerline is. This increases the chance of falling limbs breaking the lines as well as the probability the utility company will end up needing to prune the tree anyway. In this case, planting an appropriate tree can save you a lot of trouble in the future.

A few other things to think about are how much sun the area gets and what type of fruit the tree bears. First, remember that certain trees need mostly full sunlight to grow such as some birch and white pines. If you have a shadier yard oaks and maples will do well. Second, it is good to know how messy the tree is. If you plant an oak tree next to your driveway, you will have plenty of shade when it is mature but you also may have plenty of dents in your car from when the acorns fall.

Finally, always check the hardiness zone. The seacoast area is located in Zone 5 and trees planted should be known to survive here. However, when selecting a tree such as the red bud that has a large range of distribution across the county you want to make sure the seed source is from the north which will equate to a hardier tree than if it was from a seed source further south.

No tree is guaranteed to survive even if it is planted in the perfect place. When in doubt, visit your local nursery and talk to them about which tree will be most appropriate for your property. By thinking about the location before it is planted you will give it a better chance of survival and increase the likelihood that you will be able to enjoy it for years to come.

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