

*Celebrate ReTree Week, Sept. 19-25, by planting a tree –or trees–in a home landscape or the community.□*

ReTree Week is sponsored by ReTree Nebraska, a 10-year cooperative initiative to promote the proper planting and care of 1 million trees across Nebraska by 2017.

So far, nearly 85,000 tree plantings have been reported.

Fall's cooler temperatures, increased moisture and reduced humidity provide a perfect environment to increase that number. These conditions allow properly planted trees to establish their root systems quickly, giving them a jump start on spring growth.

Consider the following tips to help make fall planting a success:

- Pay close attention to the planting site. To avoid conflicts with buildings, utility lines and other trees, look up and around to consider the mature height and width of any trees planted.
- Don't forget about the soil. If it's sandy, a species that is drought tolerant may be needed, while heavier clay soils may call for a tree adapted to higher levels of soil moisture. Soil amendments are not recommended and only fertilize if there is a nutrient deficiency.
- Carefully think about planting options. Many trees grow well in Nebraska but aren't widely

planted. To promote these species, ReTree Nebraska has developed a list of Good Trees for the Good Life. To find out more about these species and where they can be purchased, visit [www.retreenebraska.unl.edu](http://www.retreenebraska.unl.edu).

- Planting a tree properly. Dig a hole as deep as the root ball (be sure excess soil is removed –see below) and twice as wide. This ensures a planting site where newly developing roots can easily establish themselves into the surrounding soil and develop a healthy root system.

- Remove the tree from its container or basket and examine the root system. (If the tree is balled and burlapped, be sure to remove all burlap and any metal basket that may be present.)

If the tree is root bound or has excessive spiraling or circling roots, it will not be able to establish itself. If the root ball contains just a few spiraling roots, score the side of the root ball with a sharp knife or pruner so developing roots are able to re-establish themselves.

Look for girdling roots as well. These must be removed or they will choke off the tree and it will not survive.

- Remove excess soil from the top of the root ball to find the tree's primary lateral roots located at or near the soil surface when you place the tree in the planting hole. Even a couple of inches of excess soil over the root system can be detrimental to the health and vigor of the root system.

- After the tree is in the ground, add a layer of mulch to protect tree roots from extreme weather conditions, eliminate weed and grass competition and preserve soil moisture.

Mulch near the trunk should be approximately one inch deep, while mulch can be up to four inches deep toward the edge of the mulch ring. Don't allow mulch to rest directly against the trunk of the tree as this can encourage circling roots, trap excess moisture and lead to insect and disease problems.

- Staking is not always required at planting, particularly for small trees or trees planted in protected areas. However, trees that are tall and leggy or in high wind areas should be staked. The goal of staking is to anchor the root ball and prevent newly developed root hairs from breaking, not to eliminate all movement within the stem of the tree.

- Water the tree at planting. The amount of water needed will depend on the soil type and the type of tree planted.

Water the day after planting, three days later and three days after that.

Continue monitoring the newly planted tree to be sure it doesn't get too dry, but remember that more newly planted trees die from too much water than from not enough. If a 6-inch screwdriver can easily be pushed into the soil surrounding the tree, adequate moisture is being provided. Using a turf irrigation system to water trees may not be optimal for the tree's requirements.

ReTree Nebraska works with more than 200 ReTree ambassadors in 80 communities. It's a joint effort of the Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, Nebraska Rural Initiative, Nebraska Community Forestry Council and the university's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For more information about ReTree Nebraska week, species selection, proper tree planting and care, visit [www.retreenebraska.unl.edu](http://www.retreenebraska.unl.edu). To view videos about tree-related topics, visit ReTree Nebraska's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/retreene1>