

Woody Plants in Urban Spaces

Planting Tips Handout

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SOIL TESTING

KING CONSERVATION DISTRICT

01



COLLECT

Take soil subsamples from several locations, 0-6" deep.

02



COMBINE

Mix subsamples in a clean bucket to create one representative sample.

03



SUBMIT

Bag 3 lbs of the mixed soil and complete the sample submission form.

FREE SOIL TESTING

Eligible residents in King Conservation District's service area receive up to **5 free soil tests, lifetime per parcel number**. Additional tests cost \$40 each.

Imagination, Conceptualization, Research

Initiate the dreaming process, set goals and intentions for your garden and come up with themes to help with plant selection. A plant's natural history contains invaluable information about its culture—even native plants may require cultivation in difficult urban areas. Gather inspiration from both established gardens and wild spaces; begin your wishlist and include functions, growth habits, expectations and contributions. Shop around, take pictures, ask friends and nursery people their opinions on plants piquing your curiosity. Inquire about availability and ideal times to plant—unfortunately they don't always coincide. Know your coldest expected winter temperatures, **SEATTLE IS NOW USDA ZONE 9a WITH AN AVERAGE ANNUAL WINTER TEMP OF 20-25 DEGREES**. Familiarize yourself with your planting sites and their microclimates, consider exposure, soil texture (tilth), drainage or infiltration, nutrition and fertility, root competition and shading from other plants, spacing and mature size expectations: **FIND PICTURES OF MATURE SPECIMENS IN NATURAL LIGHTING**.

Common Killers of Newly Planted Trees & Shrubs

(1) Improper irrigation or (2) was planted too deep. Underwatering is most common, but overwatering is also possible especially in soils or containers with poor drainage. Replant if depth or placement is inappropriate.

UNDER

Add mulch and/or compost and water more frequently and deeply.

OVER

Add drainage amendments or berm up. Always check soil moisture before irrigating.



DRAINAGE CHECK

A SIMPLE SOIL INFILTRATION TEST

01



DIG

Dig a hole 12" wide x 12" deep.

02



SATURATE

Fill with water and allow to drain completely.

03



MEASURE

Refill and measure the drop in water level after one hour.

HOW TO INTERPRET RESULTS

Under 1"/hr

Poor drainage — consider a berm, raised bed, or drainage improvements.

1-3"/hr

Suitable for most plantings.

Over 6"/hr

Rapid drainage — incorporate organic matter to improve moisture retention.



Test during dry conditions. Results between 3-6"/hr indicate relatively rapid drainage.

Ready and PLANT!

You've scoured the nurseries and amassed your collection, ordered a plant or two online, and you're ready to get them in the ground/ in your containers. Perhaps you've already prepared and amended the area, perhaps you've had the soil tested or you've already dig the hole by conducting a drainage test. You evaluate the rootball, saturating it in preparation for planting and removing girdling roots. **Your hole should be wider than the rootball, but no deeper. Break up any smooth sides and compacted areas, incorporate small amounts of amendments into native soil as necessary (see drainage check). NEVER COVER THE TRUNK WITH MULCH OR SOIL! Rootball should settle just at or above the soil line with the root flare visible.** Avoid fertilizing at planting and staking if possible. **APPLY MULCH IN A RING AND WATER GENEROUSLY.**

Aftercare

When to water new plantings depends on countless factors: sun exposure, soil composition, wind and rainfall, humidity, temperature, etc. Summer irrigate in ground plantings as necessary, add fresh layers of mulch annually to prevent evaporative moisture loss and incorporate nutrition, avoid pruning for shape too early and without guidance. **DROUGHT TOLERANCE ONLY APPLIES ONCE A PLANT IS ESTABLISHED.** Only apply fertilizer during appropriate times of year and if necessary (See Soil Testing). Use cultural controls over pesticides, fungicides and herbicides.

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