

# Tree Planting 101

## Select for Your Site

The most important question to ask yourself when preparing to select a tree is, "Does this tree fit the site?" You will have the best survivability and thrivability if you answer yes! For example, a hemlock whose native habitat is dark, humusy, cool soil may not thrive on a windblown, exposed ridge. It may survive, but whenever you have severe weather or soil conditions, you must choose your species wisely for it to thrive. Part of our work at Read's Creek Nursery is to help you choose the best selection for your site.

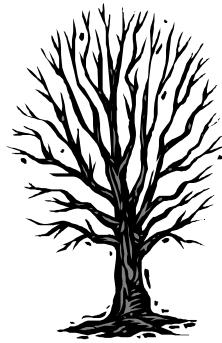
## General Site Preparation

Dig the hole at least two times the width of the rootball or container with sides that slope inward. This will help aerate soil and provide oxygen which is so important to tree roots. Do not dig the hole any deeper than your rootball. This is very important! Trees planted too deeply can die within a month, or even worse, four or five years down the road. What a waste of time!

## Soil Amendments

The soil that is excavated from the hole at planting time is the best soil for backfilling your new tree. If you use a lighter soil, you

risk creating what is known as "the bathtub effect" in poorly drained soils—which means that the planting hole can fill up with water during a heavy rain and cause suffocation. Also, new roots tend to circle in the lighter soil. While it may feel good to tuck in a new tree with fluffy soil, resist the temptation!



If your excavated soil is in the form of sticky clay balls, it contains very little oxygen and most plant life will not thrive. If you face this situation, first, it is very important to carefully select a tree that will tolerate this condition. Second, make your hole at least three times the width of the rootball and backfill with heavy black dirt. Third, consider planting the tree high - up to one third of the ball can be raised above the soil. Slope black dirt away from the root flare. Studies from Iowa State show excellent results with this method.

## The Planting

When determining your planting depth, it is very important to locate the root flare - that flared-out base of the trunk where it meets its roots. Don't confuse this with the graft which is part of the trunk. When planting, the root flare should be at grade level. Sometimes though, during repeated transplanting at the growing stage or when digging, as in the case of balled and burlapped material, the tree ends up lower as soil gets pushed up the trunk. Once you identify the root flare, you can measure how deeply you need to dig your hole.

## Balled and Burlapped

Taking the burlap and wire basket off of dug trees can be hazardous! Your aim is to keep the ball intact, but if the tree is freshly dug or otherwise soft, you must keep it all together until it is lowered carefully in the hole. Once it is positioned properly and at the correct depth, backfill about half to two thirds of the way. At this point, remove twine from around the trunk and cut away as much burlap as you can so water can easily soak the ball.

Homeowners can plant B&B trees themselves, but they are heavy and don't have handles! They can be rolled, but never dropped. Read's Creek Nursery is always available to plant B&B trees for you. We are also beginning to carry larger trees that are container grown and are therefore easier to handle.

## Mulch

Mulch is a very important component in tree planting success. We suggest 3-4" of bark in at least a two-foot radius around the trunk. Mulch keeps grass down so mowers don't nick the trunk. It also keeps competitive weeds at bay, while conserving moisture. Be sure to keep mulch from direct contact with the trunk.

## Fertilizer

We do not recommend fertilizer at planting time. Air and water to the roots are sufficient. Fertilizing can promote too much top growth in relation to root growth and that can lead to loss.

## Spring News

First things first! Benjamin Joseph was born at home on August 29, 2002! He is a wonderful addition to our family and has been such a joy this winter! You'll undoubtedly see him this spring being toted around the nursery and sitting in the compost!

It's been a dry winter - added to a dry fall - and if we don't have an exceptionally wet spring, it's going to be tough for some new plantings this summer. See page 2 for tips on improving chances for successful growing. New features at the nursery this year include a reorganized sales yard that we hope will educate and inspire you to new gardening heights. We are also installing new demonstration gardens, and we're making some exciting additions to the gift shop. And as always, we will offer wonderful new varieties of trees, shrubs, and perennials and the best possible service.

Thanks to all who made last season great! We look forward to serving you this year in all your planting needs.  
Bill Kappler and Lisa Ashley

# Great Perennials for 2003

Every year plant growers and hybridizers come up with loads of new perennials for our home gardens. Part of our job at the nursery is to select those that have the most garden potential, in terms of beauty, hardiness, and disease resistance, for our area—and the best choices are not always the most advertised! Plus there are lots of plants that aren't "new" but are rediscovered natives that can add lots of natural beauty. Read on for a listing of just some of the new favorites at Read's Creek Nursery this year. Stop in and see what's new!

## ***Aconitum 'Bressingham Spire'***

A wonderful monkshood that doesn't threaten to snap just when it's the most beautiful. It's a dwarf, only about 24", with dark violet blue flowers starting in midsummer.

## ***Ajuga 'Chocolate Chip'***

This is a dense growing groundcover that works well in light shade. It's much more refined than the larger growing *Ajugas*, and it's very tight with bronzy-purple leaves and blue flower spikes in early spring. Look for '**Vanilla Chip**' this year, too, with the same tight growth and green/white leaves.

## ***Baptisia australis 'Purple Smoke'***

I really love Baptisias! They're so hardy and sturdy, they give the garden that elegant look of delphiniums without the fuss! '**Purple Smoke**' has dusty-purple spires, lush green foliage, and dark stems. Grows to 50"

## ***Baptisia 'Carolina Moonlight'***

Another *Baptisia*, but this one's unique in that the foliage is soft grey-green and the spikes are yellow!

## ***Brunnera 'Jack Frost'***

This plant has been around for a few years, but I wanted to make sure it was a vigorous grower before I backed it—so many variegated varieties are not! This one is wonderful—the foliage is richly veined with grass-green over silver. The blue flowers are almost a little shocking, and appear so early the foliage isn't completely unfurled. Loves humus and partial shade.

## ***Dicentra spectabilis 'Gold Heart'***

The '**Gold Heart**' foliage is bright and pure, sure to bring color into a shady corner. In fact, growing it in light shade brings out the best color and sets off the deep pink bleeding hearts dangling along the stems.

## ***Huechera 'Petite Pearl Fairy'***

This is a very cute, very tiny heuchera in one of our demonstration gardens and when it starts blooming it's just so floriferous! Dark bronze-purple with silver overlays and perfect petite pink flowers. Very dwarf in every way, only growing 10" tall. It belongs in everyone's rock garden.

## ***Nepeta faassenii 'Walker's Low'***

This form of catmint is very tidy and looks great hedged along a border or allowed to tumble slightly over a wall. If you let your imagination stretch a little, it could be mistaken for lavender, which so many of us desire, but few have success in growing. It doesn't have a lavender fragrance, but we're talking looks here!

## ***Penstemon 'Prairie Dusk'***

This plant moved quickly out of the nursery last summer for two reasons: one, it happily bloomed in pots with no coaxing whatsoever, drawing hummingbirds into the hoopouses for a sip; and two, our display plant along the shade house bloomed full and bright for about six weeks. Very hardy, it just doesn't like it too wet.

## **Perennial Plant of the Year**

### *Leucanthemum 'Becky'*

'Becky' is the quintessential daisy - June wedding bouquets, breezy summer arrangements and daisy chains. This cultivar, unlike the field daisy species, produces huge blooms all summer long on straight strong stems. The dense foliage forms a mat thereby crowding out weeds and other competitors. Just about the only thing that gives it trouble is excessive moisture. Plant 'Becky' in well-drained soil, perhaps even sloped, to encourage excellent drainage. Try with *Veronica*, *Monarda*, or *Lobelia* for great contrast.

- 2002 *Phlox paniculata* 'David'
- 2001 *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster'
- 2000 *Scabiosa* 'Butterfly Blue'
- 1999 *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm'
- 1998 *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'
- 1997 *Salvia* 'May Night'
- 1996 *Penstemon* 'Husker Red'
- 1995 *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
- 1994 *Astilbe* 'Sprite'
- 1993 *Veronica* 'Sunny Border Blue'
- 1992 *Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam'

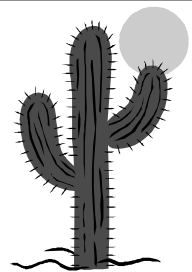
## A Drought Year?

only had a low of -18 (which is a full zone warmer than usual), there will likely be some loss.

But it was a dry fall too, and that means that we could be setting up for drought conditions, not only in southwest Wisconsin, but in many other areas in the Midwest. What does that mean to new plantings? Certainly you'll need to water, not only this year's plantings, but also two and three year old plantings, for even they have not developed an adequate root structure to support themselves. Yes, they will likely live, but may get stressed enough to become diseased and weak without additional moisture. This decreases their winter hardiness.

Although it may seem logical to fertilize trees and shrubs when you know they are going through a tough time, resist that urge! Fertilizer will only push new growth that will make it harder for the tree to overwinter. If we do have dry conditions, 2003 will just be one of those narrow rings. To compensate, we just have to water, water, water.

It's been a dry winter. It's hard to predict what the effects will be on perennials that endured cold temps without adequate snowcover. Even though we've



# Troughs, Goodies, and Woodies

We like to travel out West during our “down” time to check out nurseries and suppliers and to see if we can find something new - and we always do! The state of Oregon is one of the finest growing areas for nursery stock in the United States. This time of year the weather is like a natural atomizer that encourages maximum plant growth.

The other reason Oregon is known as a plant mecca is that really creative plant people are drawn there and have developed new varieties and cultivars as well as all those cool topiaries. Plus, some of these plantfolk wander places like the Siskiyou Forest just looking for new species.

This year I traveled the valley between Portland and Corvallis in search of nurseries from Yamhill to Sandy. I had the opportunity to meet great people and see wonderful plants. Here are a few of the new woodies I discovered:

***Fraxinus p. 'Variegata'***

Variegated Green Ash

***Ginkgo 'Jade Butterfly'***

***Liquidamber s. 'Moraine'***

A sweetgum hardy in MN!

***Cercidiphyllum j. 'Ruby'***

A dark leafed Katsura



We look forward to sharing these unique specimens with you this year! Another part of my trip through Oregon this winter took me to Squaw Mountain and our supplier of semper-

vivums (hens and chicks) and other little alpine goodies. There he had a couple truckloads of volcanic rock gathered from Northern California. Volcanic rock is very light and porous, and makes a great vessel for shallow-rooted, drainage-loving alpiners. He then hand-chisels planting holes, some with only one hole, some with three - perfect for making mini gardens. They would be wonderful in a rock garden or simply as patio planters.

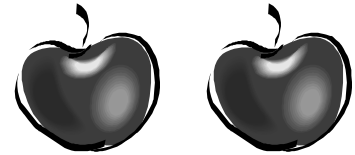
How could we resist? We'll have a large selection of volcanic rocks - right here in Wisconsin! You can buy them as is, or they will be available planted with a neat selection of semps and other alpiners.

Bill Kappler

## Grafting Fruit Trees with Mark Shepard

Read's Creek Nursery is pleased to host two grafting classes with Viola grower Mark Shepard on the weekend of April 25-26. If you don't know Mark, you're in for a wonderful education of the science, art, value, and beauty of grafting heirloom fruit trees. Mark will present an overview of the grafting process and then you get to work! Included in the cost of the class will be your choice of two scions, rootstock, and all the help and tools you need to get the job done. Many heirloom varieties from locally grown trees will be available. Additional scions, rootstock, and other grafting materials can be purchased.

The fee per class is \$30. All proceeds will benefit Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School in Viroqua. Please contact 637-7828 to reserve your space.



# Spotlight Shrubs

Enter the world of *Euonymus* shrubs! While we all have seen burning bushes, outstanding in their fiery red fall splendor, the other hardy members of that genus go unused in most of our landscapes - not because they aren't equally or more beautiful, but because they are not easily available or are otherwise unknown.

Did you know that Read's Creek Nursery carries ten varieties of *Euonymus* shrubs? They all have some similar qualities like providing wildlife food, interesting bark and twigs, and beautiful fall color. Here's a brief showing of our favorites:

***Euonymus alatus 'Rudy Haag'*** - A really dwarf burning bush - 3-4' tall with a squat shape. (Poor Rudy.)

***Euonymus atropurpureus*** - This large shrub can reach heights of 25'. The twigs are square and green with white ribs. Inconspicuous flowers lead to scarlet fruit. Orange fall color.

***Euonymus bungeanus 'Pink Lady'*** - This is a large shrub, reaching 20' tall and wide, making it perfect for a hedgerow or large shrub border. And it works in the shade! The pendulous nature becomes even more so when it's laden with pink fruit in the fall. The fall foliage I can best describe as hot coral. It's a traffic stopper. Also available in tree form.

***Euonymus europaeus 'Red Cap'*** - A medium shrub, around 12' which is medium in the *euonymus* world, with excellent fruit production and red-

purple fall color. Great tolerance to black walnut toxicity and shade. Also known as Spindle Tree.

## Hanging Baskets

Reserve your hanging basket early - tag it now and we'll hold it until you're ready! Large specimen baskets available.



**Opening  
 April 15 -**  
 Or earlier by  
 appointment



***Please return  
 nursery pots!***



**Top 10 Reasons why people select their  
 plants from Read's Creek Nursery . . .**

- # 10. More than 1,000 hardy plant varieties
- # 9. Unusual annual flowers, vegetables, and herbs
- # 8. Environmentally sound growing practices
- # 7. Experienced planting advice
- # 6. Plant wish lists fulfilled (if we don't have it, we can get it!)
- # 5. Helpful information on our website  
[www.readscreeknursery.com](http://www.readscreeknursery.com)
- # 4. Site-specific plant solutions
- # 3. Landscaping services available
- # 2. Resource and reference library on hand

**And, the number one reason why people select  
 their plants from Read's Creek Nursery . . .**

**We'll work hard to earn your business !**

**[www.readscreeknursery.com](http://www.readscreeknursery.com)**

Log on to our internet site for:

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- Photos
- Sending wish lists
- Emailing your gardening questions

We'd love to hear from you - [ashkapp@mwt.net](mailto:ashkapp@mwt.net)

**We're easy to find!** Located right on Hwy.14 just  
 3 miles west of Readstown. The entrance is west of the  
 sundial.

