

Spring Time is Tree Planting Time

In Spring we join with nature to renew the face of the Earth. Some of us plant flowers, others start a garden, almost all of us begin yard work that includes everything from removing debris that has accumulated over winter, to weeding, to prepping our summer lawn. To replenish trees – especially with so many that have been toppled by Hurricane Sandy – the DEC Tree Nursery in Saratoga, NY offers an economical way to purchase seedlings and also provides the convenience of shipping them right to your door.



"While many people appreciate trees for their beauty and shade value, they provide us so much more." says Kali Bird of Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Dutchess County, "They cool our communities, mitigate floods, prevent soil erosion, and provide food and shelter for the wildlife that clean up our litter, eat nuisance insects, and help pollinate crops." The DEC website further expounds the benefits of trees: "They help protect our streams and lakes by stabilizing soil and using nutrients that would otherwise wash into waterways. Trees help moderate temperature and muffle noise. They even help improve air quality by absorbing some airborne compounds that could be harmful to us, and by giving off oxygen."

The DEC Tree Nursery begins taking orders in January, and ships trees between mid-April and the third week of May. This coincides with our many spring celebrations: Easter (April 21 next year), Earth Day (April 22), Arbor Day (April 26), May Day (May 1), Cinco de Mayo (May 5), Mother's Day (May 12), Pentecost (May 19), Memorial Day (May 27). Prices vary according to species, but range from about \$25 per 25 units to about \$60 per 100 units – conifers are less, hardwoods are more. See www.dec.ny.gov/animals/75799.html for a complete price list and availability.

For school children to learn the structure of trees, their species, and what trees need and how they grow, the DEC Saratoga Tree Nursery provides a special School Program at a reduced cost. The order form is available at www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/2012school.pdf. As seedlings mature, the young trees are a personal way of relating a living, visible plant to what they learn in textbooks. A school arboreal program is an effective learning experience in which students have an opportunity to take the lead in teaching their parents about trees, is a venue for parent-school partnership, and provides all participants a personalized link to nature. At Robert Graves School in Ulster County where such a program is in place, principal Errin Parese says, "The importance of teaching students about nature, trees, and our environment is critical in today's high tech society. So many of our students are very heavily engaged in technology and providing them with a tree to plant helps them learn how they can positively impact our environment and play a role. I am very happy that this has been an option for our kids and I know it will create a lasting memory for some of them."

Planting Instructions

Seedlings are perishable. Using a shovel and bucket, plant soon after seedlings are delivered.

1. Place the seedlings in a bucket and fill with water until all the roots are covered.
2. Remove all vegetation down to the soil layer for at least one foot around the planting site to reduce nutrient competition.
3. Dig a hole large enough to contain the roots.
4. Place the roots of the seedling in the hole and carefully spread them out. The root collar (where roots join the stem) should be at or just below the ground's surface. The seedling should stand straight.
5. Fill the hole with soil and gently compact the soil to remove air pockets that could dry out the roots and kill the seedling.
6. Water the seedling slowly and thoroughly after planting to settle the soil. If rainfall is not adequate, water weekly after planting for the first year.
7. Mark the seedlings with a stake or flagging so they won't be cut off with a lawn mower. Also, cover with a tube, or surround with fencing or mesh, if there is the likelihood of deer eating the saplings.
8. Fertilizer is not recommended at planting time. It can be applied two or three years after planting when the root system has developed.