

## **Native Plant Care**

### ***Planting, Watering & Pruning Native Plants***

#### **When to Plant**

Container plants can be brought and planted successfully anytime during the year as long as adequate water is provided. Our best planting season begins around October and continues until December. January through March can be a suitable planting season if soils aren't too wet or frozen. Only plant in April through September if forced to. High temperatures make watering tricky and plant survival a real challenge.

#### **Planting Procedure**

A modern trend in landscaping is to plant shrubs in large beds. When this design concept is followed, it's best to prepare the entire bed versus digging individual holes. In many areas the soils are poorly drained, so we recommend planting trees or shrubs slightly above grade in raised beds or mounds. Finish with 3 – 4 inches of an organic mulch on the surface to conserve moisture, discourage turf and increase growth and survival.

- When planting container-grown plants, be sure to disturb the root zone area of the plant, especially if it's "potbound". Break up the ball gently with fingers and thumbs. Again, don't plant too deep! Because container plants are usually grown in high organic soil mixes, we recommend adding organic matter to the backfill. Be sure to blend this into the backfill, again using as much native soil as possible.

#### **Fertilizing**

If lime is needed to raise the pH of the soil, it should be mixed in at planting time. This is also the perfect time to add phosphorus and potassium if needed. A soil test will tell you the amounts you need. Soil test kits are available from our office and at some of the local garden centers. In lieu of soil testing results, add a half cup of lime and fourth cup of 5-10-10 or equivalent per bushel of backfill soil. Don't add lime if planting acid-loving plants. Don't place fertilizer into the planting hole in concentrated amounts as it can seriously injure the roots. Do your first surface fertilizations 6 to 9 months after planting, but never in the summer. Use a complete organic fertilizer with a maximum of 10% nitrogen at a annual rate of 3 to 4 cups per 100 square feet of ground. Split this amount into 2 half applications in spring and early fall.

#### **Watering Your Native Plants**

Water your plant thoroughly once at home and let the water soak through the soil. If you cannot plant it within a few days of receiving it, you can leave the plant outside in partial sun and monitor its moisture.

Water your plant well after putting it in the ground, and make sure it stays well watered for the first year to let it get established. The best time to water your garden is early in the morning, before the sun is high. If you live in a humid climate, watering at this time lets the sun evaporate the standing water from the foliage of your plants, preventing mildew. And in all climates, you will lose less water to evaporation by the sun's rays if you apply it early in the day.

1. The best method of watering shrubs is with a soaker type hose or to use the end of the hose to insure that the roots of the plants receive a thorough watering. It is best to keep water off of the foliage because it can cause plant diseases.
2. If you have a drip irrigation system you have to be sure that the soil has adequate moisture, as drip irrigation does not do a good job once the soil has been dried out. Check around the plants to ensure that they are receiving the right amount.
3. Buy a moisture meter. This inexpensive device will allow you to check the moisture not only in your shrub beds, but also in your lawn, house plants, and vegetable garden. A moisture level of 50% or greater is recommended.
4. Watering After Planting. Water must be applied during the first growing season. Wet the soil thoroughly enough to soak the entire root system at least once every 5 days during drought conditions and possibly less often under milder temperatures. Rainfall will not substitute for direct application of water to the rootball, however, it may allow you to lengthen the watering interval a couple of days.