



The Right Plant for the Right Place

When planting an annual, perennial, or woody plant, there are several steps to making a proper selection for your landscape. The common mistake made by most homeowners is to head out to the local nursery and select a plant based on its appearance. Spring flower, fall color, and winter fruits are but a few of the aesthetic attributes to catch a shopper's attention. Although these attributes are important, they do not determine the ability of the plant to establish and successfully grow in a given location. Before you make the trip to a plant nursery, some homework should be done to determine the proper plant for the location you have in mind. This research will pay off by decreasing the amount of money and time spent on maintaining your new plant of choice. The following approach provides some general considerations to guide you in purchasing a plant that will be successful in your backyard.

Step One: Evaluate Your Planting Location

Environmental Considerations for Plant Selection

- Light Availability- intensity and duration (full sun versus deep shade)
- Water Availability- the quality (pH, pollutants) and quantity of water
- Exposure- temperature extremes and wind/air movement
- Soils- drainage and compaction of the location, influencing water uptake
- Existing Vegetation- competition for nutrients water and light.
- Hardiness Zone- we are Zone 5, purchase plants numbered 5 or lower

Step Two: A Small Tree Today is a Big Tree Tomorrow

Size Considerations for Location

- Plant Height and Spread- allow the plant to grow into its mature size
- Rooting Space- the below ground portion of the plant require area
- Environmental Influences- site conditions can alter growth size and shape

Step Three: Don't Plant a Problem

Installation and Maintenance Considerations

- Site Preparation- improve soil by adding organic matter prior to planting
- Transplantability- certain species tolerate root loss better than others
- Regulations- planting by a sidewalk or building will require pruning
- Irrigation- reduces watering during summer months
- Resistance- certain varieties of plant species can overcome insect/disease attacks
- Management- the amount of attention the plant will require (pruning, spraying, etc.)

Step Four: Plant Appearance

Aesthetic Considerations

- Flower- timing and color
- Fruit- winter interest and wildlife benefits
- Foliage- texture, variegation, and shape
- Fall Color- leaf drop and color change
- Growth Habit- plants come in many shapes and sizes
- Bark- color and texture

Of course, the final step is the least important but the most enjoyable part of the process. If these general steps are applied to your situation, the amount of time and money spent maintaining the plant will be minimal and your enjoyment will be maximized. Just a friendly reminder, always be sure to call JULIE at (800) 892-0123 to have utilities marked prior to planting. When planting in a public right of way, you must apply for a parkway planting permit with the Village of Riverside. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Village Forester, Mike Collins, at (708) 442-3590, extension 502 or consult the following websites.

Chicago Botanic Garden
www.chicago-botanic.org

Morton Arboretum
www.mortonarb.org