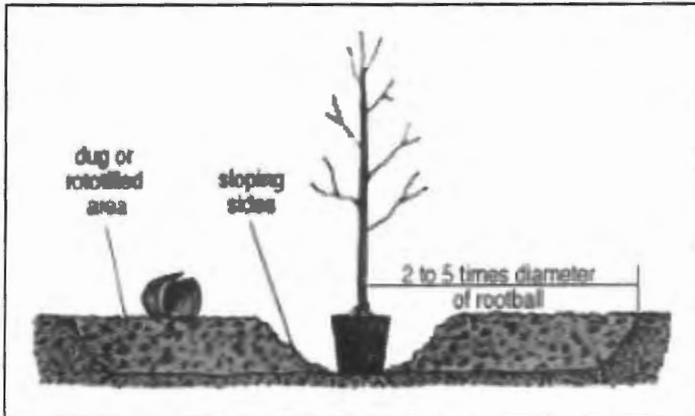


## Planting a Containerized Tree

November through February are the best months to plant trees in the Lake Houston area. The official Texas Arbor Day is the first Friday in November.



Fifth Graders at Oak Forest plant a thirty gallon tree each year as a going away gift to the school. Students are encouraged to earn or save \$3 during the year as their contribution to this tradition. Planting is usually in February.

This year we are planting a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ tree.

**If a tree is planted correctly, it has the potential to grow twice as fast and live at least twice as long as one that is incorrectly planted.**

Prepare the tree by trimming off any broken or lower branches. Do not cut the top of the tree and you should never prune more than 1/3 of the branch area.

**Dig Safely**—Watch for sprinkler lines, telephone and power lines.

Prior to digging it is important to scrape off all grass or sod on the surface including the roots of the grass and discard this in the compost heap or away from the digging site.

Dig a hole as deep as the height of the container of the tree, and approximately 5 times the width of the container. The loosened and prepared soil will encourage root growth beyond the current root ball and will result in a healthier tree. An easy way to measure and mark this is with a water hose outlining the circle you will dig. Cover remaining grass with plastic before piling soil on it.

Keep the soil around the roots when transplanting. Always handle your tree by the ball or the container, not by the trunk or branches. Don't let the root ball dry out. Help prevent root girdling by vertically cutting any roots that show tendencies to circle the root ball.

After placing the tree and making sure it is fairly level, place soil firmly but not tightly around the root ball. It is best to use the soil that came out of the hole to plant the tree. For a very large hole it is OK to mix in a bag or two of potting soil or compost. If the soil is dry, water before and while closing the hole to make sure water is around the roots.

Place a protective 3-5 foot circle of mulch around the tree in a 'donut' shape so that water will sink down around the roots and not just run off and away from the tree. Mulch should not cover the trunk above the soil line. Do not fertilize until the beginning of the next spring.

Make certain that the tree gets a 5 gallon bucket of water every week for the first year.

It should be fertilized each spring, pruned if necessary, weeds and grass should be removed back to the original mulch line, and new mulch spread around the base.

In December students plant an individual acorn which will grow into a small oak tree they can take home.