

Gardens

THE ART OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

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Photos by
www.hortusois.com



This tree was properly planted, with the top main root right at the surface.

Crimes Against Trees (Palms Too) - Part I

We love the shade and the ambiance trees and palms provide. They clean our air, create oxygen and their roots hold the soil together to prevent erosion. In our gardens they create a sense of enclosure and provide scale to the human figure. A tree can be headed for a long healthy life if these placement, selection, planting, and establishment tips are followed.

Research the growth habits for the tree you want. An evergreen like a magnolia or an oak provides year round shade while a deciduous tree such as sweetgum or bald cypress lets the winter sun through. With overhead wires or a small lot skip the large canopy tree and select a columnar or understory tree. Check soil drainage and pH. Know the size of the proposed rootball and dig the hole prior to delivery in case there are irresolvable conflicts with underground obstructions or a high water table. Whacking off part of a rootball to avoid pipes is not a solution. Prior to digging call Sunshine State at 800.432.4770 for a free underground utility check.

When selecting a tree look for a single straight trunk or well formed multiple trunks if it's a ligustrum, crape myrtle or yaupon holly. Reject trees with major crossing branches, too many branches attached to the trunk at one point, double trunks or damage to the bark. Now it's time for an inspection of the root ball where problems will stunt or kill a tree. Expect to get some dirt under the fingernails as you find the top main root at the trunk. It must be at or an inch or two above the soil level. That top root may have been buried in the nursery as the tree was stepped up from smaller containers. If the soil can easily be removed to expose the root, continue with the next step.



This one wasn't. The trunk is deformed due to a circling root below the surface.

Crimes Against Trees

The poor branch structure makes this tree a prime candidate for rejection.



Trees held too long in their containers will develop a root system that will never allow the tree to thrive. Pass on root bound trees with circling roots at the trunk or in the rootball since they will strangle the trunk and may never anchor the tree adequately.

At planting, be absolutely sure the top main root at the trunk is visible with one to two inches above grade. If the main root is buried inside the rootball, remove soil to expose it. The planting hole must be wider than the rootball but the bottom must be exactly the right depth. If it is too deep, any added soil must be thoroughly compacted so the tree doesn't settle and drop the top main root below grade. Refill with clean native soil (no amendments) in stages--no compacting, but watering as you go to eliminate air pockets. Place a slight saucer of soil right at the

edge of the rootball and place only one inch of mulch over the rootball and 10 inches away from the trunk. Provide a mulch circle for a minimum diameter of four feet. Water regularly until it is established (three months per inch of tree diameter). **Repeat-watering regularly until it is established. Yes, watering is that important!** When staked or guyed, the tree must be able to move slightly in the breeze so it can develop a strong trunk. Check attachments regularly and remove them after about one year or when the roots have anchored the tree.

Trees and palms will reward you with years of service and beauty, if they are selected and planted correctly in the right places. For all of the tree information you could ever desire, check for Part II in the next issue. ▲