

## **HOW TO BUY A TREE**

### **Always try to select trees yourself!**

When buying trees, there are 4 issues to settle: tree species, size, price and condition. You can settle 3 of them over the telephone (species, size and price). You should assess tree condition with your own eyes.

### **Inspect the Crown:**

Be extra careful to inspect for structural defects on large-maturing shade trees like oaks and maples. Young shade trees with structural defects (poor branch attachments, for example) become serious safety hazards as they reach maturity. This is not as much an issue with smaller ornamental trees.

For large-maturing shade trees, beware of trunks that fork low to the ground, tight V-shaped branch crotches with the bark rolled inward, and multiple branches arising from one place on the trunk. These are structural weaknesses.

Look at the branches – this is where the leaves, the food factories of the tree, will be. You're looking for a general covering of small to medium size branches. Beware of large branches that are low on the trunk.

### **Inspect the Trunk:**

These defects are important to avoid on all trees:

Avoid trees with large bark injuries (deer rubbing, mechanical wounds, etc.) Large bark injuries can develop into cracks and the wood behind these injuries can develop decay.

Avoid trees with sprouts around the base – this is a sign of biological stress and is probably an indication that the tree was initially planted too deep.

Learn to recognize proper pruning – avoid trees with branch stubs or flush cuts. Improper pruning in the nursery can cause a number of problems, including “frost cracks”, “sun scald”, excessive sprouting, and decay.

Trunk wrap is unnecessary and can hide defects. Some nurseries use a cardboard shield to protect the trunk from injury during shipping & handling. Always remove it to inspect the trunk before you accept the tree. It can be reattached for further handling.

### **Inspecting the Roots:**

For balled and burlapped trees (B&B), avoid undersized root balls. Trees are sold by caliper (trunk diameter 6" above the ground), or height. The American Association of Nurserymen maintains a set of standards for nurseries selling trees. You should insist that the root ball meets these specifications.

For container-grown trees, avoid trees with large circling roots. Very gently remove the container to inspect the root system.

For bare-root trees, avoid trees with dried up or mechanically damaged roots.

### **Standards for Nursery Stock:**

<u>Caliper</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Root Ball Diameter</u>	<u>Approx Weight</u>
1 inch	5 feet	16 inches (min.)	100 lbs
1 ¼ inches	7 feet	18 inches (min.)	150 lbs
1 ½ inches	8 feet	20 inches (min.)	200 lbs
1 ¾ inches	9 feet	22 inches (min.)	260 lbs
2 inches	10 feet	24 inches (min.)	300 lbs
2 ½ inches	12 feet	28 inches (min.)	600 lbs
3 inches	14 feet	32 inches (min.)	750 lbs
3 ½ inches	16 feet	38 inches (min.)	1350 lbs
4 inches	18 feet	42 inches (min.)	1800 lbs