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Tree Planting Window Now Open

Think about the soil conditions in your landscape right now. Cool air temperatures of late haven't changed soil temperatures all that much, meaning they are likely nice and warm. Moisture levels have been replenished to a slight degree.

Now think ahead to soil conditions in the spring. Coming out of winter, soils are typically fairly cool well in to spring time. This last year was certainly an exception, but, some springs bring significant rainfall as well, leaving soils low in oxygen levels.

Which environment sounds more conducive to planting a tree? In most cases, the warm, moist soils associated with fall tend to encourage growth much more than cool, low oxygen soils that do the opposite. Add to that, the fact that fall root growth generally means a tree can become established a number of months before a spring-planted tree does, giving it a greater ability to handle some of those less than ideal spring conditions and summer stresses as well.

If you want to try a fall planting, the window is open from now until late October. In most years, this allows plenty of time for the roots of *most* trees to become established before the ground freezes. Exceptions would include beech, birch, redbud, magnolia, tulip poplar, willow oak, scarlet oak, black oak, willows, and dogwood. These trees don't produce enough root growth in the fall and should be planted only in the spring.

Fall planting isn't a stress/maintenance free program, however. The tops might be dormant, but the roots are still growing, meaning soil moisture levels are still important. Soil should be moist, but not soggy. To keep trees in good condition, water as needed this fall and even during the winter months as we see some warm/dry spells. Consider mulch as well. It helps reduce soil moisture loss while slowing soil cooling, ensuring that root growth continues for as long as possible.

The fall planting window is also a great time for planting Conservation Trees from the Kansas Forest Service. These container-grown seedlings are available through October 15th. Check out program details and order online at: http://www.kansasforests.org/conservation_trees/ .