Fall Planting has Advantages

If you feel invigorated by the cool, fall weather, use some of that energy to plant some trees and shrubs in the landscape. The warm, moist soil, cooler air temperature and bright sun are ideal conditions to get your new plants rooted in before they have to face the heat next summer.

Nurseries and garden stores are usually fairly well stocked with trees and shrubs in September and October.

The key point to remember when planting a tree or shrub is that, in order for the new plant to survive and grow after planting, it must grow roots out into the "backfill" soil surrounding its original root ball. The faster and more extensively roots grow into the backfill, the faster the plant will become established.

There are many physical factors that influence root growth. These include the temperature and moisture content of the soil, soil density, drainage and aeration.

Roots never go completely dormant like trunks and stems. They will grow whenever conditions are favorable. Assuming that plant is planted into a non-compacted, well-drained, moist soil, the soil is warm enough for roots of most woody plants to grow well into the winter.

This rooting-head-start can be a real advantage in years following a hot dry spring.

Another factor affecting root growth of woody plants is physiology. In general, trees and shrubs alternate top growth and root growth. During periods of rapid top growth, root growth slows down. Then, when the foliage matures, it manufactures carbohydrates through photosynthesis, some of which are mobilized to the roots. Unless there are other limiting factors, these carbohydrates usually promote a "flush" of root growth in late summer or fall. Cooler air temperature and bright days in fall are optimal for photosynthesis, allowing the fall-planted trees and shrubs to "stock the larder" with carbohydrate reserves before winter.

By Chris Starbuck, State Woody Ornamental Specialist

COORDINATOR’S COMMENTS

This last February we hosted the first ever professional development study tour for Missouri Master Gardeners to Costa Rica.

As University Outreach and Extension Master Gardeners, our mission is to involve people in improving their quality of life through horticultural education. This study trip was aimed at enabling the Master Gardeners to view our own horticultural environment through the eyes of another culture. And we sure accomplished our goal!

We had an extremely rewarding trip to Costa Rica. We learned much about the culture of another country, as well as horticulture. It was incredible to see our houseplants and tropical annuals in their natural setting, sometimes as tall as 30 plus feet!

The weather was perfect with daytime temperatures hovering around 80 degrees. Some locations were warmer, and some cooler -- I even wore my long johns once! And for those of you that enjoy watching birds while looking at plants - this is the perfect trip.

We enjoyed the culture, the food and the wonderful hospitality of the Costa Rican people, all while enjoying the bonds we formed as Master Gardeners in this country. And we had several guests along, and they thoroughly enjoyed the trip as well. I hope you will consider joining us as we travel back to Costa Rica this February.

Mary Kroening
State Master Gardener Coordinator
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"I went to Australia and Costa Rica within a six months period. Australia was wonderful, but I already knew a lot about its plants and animals. Costa Rica was a surprise. How could we Americans be on the same continent as this magical country and know so little about it? I want to go back!"

- Lucy Frey

"What could be more appropriate for master gardeners than to visit a country that is one big garden? Fourteen gardeners from Missouri enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime experiences in Costa Rica February 8-19 this year. We traveled, saw sights, shared meals and enjoyed the special fellowship of gardeners. The small country of Costa Rica is a garden, or better said, a composite of many gardens. Few places in the world offer such a diversity of climate, habitats, flora and fauna. Where else can one travel in a day's time from Caribbean rainforest through cloud forest and sub-alpine habitats and on through temperate mountain valleys to the placid semiarid Pacific coast? Flowers, fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, exotic birds, butterflies and animals, marvellous food, wonderful people. We saw it all. At least we tried. Any one of us would return in a heartbeat. We all recommend the experience to other master gardeners."

- Bruce Beck, Agronomy Specialist, Poplar Bluff
Master Gardeners Have Another Opportunity to Visit Costa Rica

What the trip will include:
- A pre-trip orientation session in January 2003 with locations to be announced.
- A 12-day horticulture study trip to Costa Rica in February 2003.
- Several nights stay at EARTH University, where we will visit a tropical forest and tour an eco-friendly plantation.
- Workshop trainings on Plants that Heal, Making Botanical Soaps and Shampoo and Forests that Bear Fruit.
- No requirement of language training.

Who is eligible to register?
- University Outreach and Extension Master Gardeners along with one non-Master Gardener traveling companion.
- Master Gardeners desiring a new perspective on their horticultural programming
- Master Gardeners looking for an international experience

GENERAL INFORMATION
Reservations will be taken on a first come, first serve basis.

A deposit of $500 per person is required with the reservation. Final payment is due at the end of December, at which time no more reservations will be accepted.

CANCELLATION AND REFUNDS POLICY
A full refund will be given up to 90 days prior to trip departure less a $100 per person processing fee. There will be no refunds after the end of December.

PACKAGE PRICE
$2,995* per person, double occupancy
$160 additional cost for single occupancy

*Prices subject to change depending upon airfare. Must have 14 participants minimum, 20 maximum.

PACKAGE INCLUDES
- Airfare
- All meals including tips in Costa Rica
- 11 nights lodging in Costa Rica, 1 night lodging in KCI
- All admissions per itinerary
- Private workshops
- Services of Extension co-leaders and onsite tour guides

Schedule to, in and from Costa Rica may vary depending upon flight arrangements and travel conditions, and U.S. flight security.

REGISTRATION PROCESS
Interested Master Gardeners should request a registration packet from Mary Kroening (573)882-9633, kroeningm@missouri.edu Glen Easter (573)769-2071, easterg@ext.missouri.edu. A completed registration must be received by the end of December.

Pansies Pack A Powerful Punch in Winter Gardens

Now is the time that all gardeners are looking toward putting their gardens to bed for the winter and not thinking about planting flowers. However, fall is an ideal time to plant pansies for glorious late fall and early spring flowers. As Rebecca Kolls of Rebecca's Garden states so well - “Don’t be fooled by the name - pansy - as they are one of the hardiest flowers of the bunch!”

Pansies are tough plants that are cold tolerant and able to survive outdoors during most winters in mid-Missouri.

Pansies are cool weather plants and prefer nighttime temperatures of 50 degrees and daytime temperatures around 60 degrees, thus are ideal for fall color, and are a terrific complement to bulbs in the springtime before perennials start blooming.

Getting pansies started in the summer is difficult since they have this tendency to prefer cooler weather, thus fall or early spring are ideal times to plant pansies.

Many times pansies seeded in the fall will even bloom all winter long. Last year I planted my pots with pansies in October and they bloomed wonderfully throughout the winter. The sudden dip we had in late March down to 7 degrees slowed them down for a couple days, but then they came back with renewed life and were glorious all spring. But once daytime temperatures start hovering over 75 degrees, pansies start to die out and it is time to remove them and plant summer material.

Perhaps the most ideal thing about pansies is that they come in almost every color and combination of colors.

The pansy 'Ultima Morpho' was selected as a 2002 All-America Selection Flower Award Winner. Ultima Morpho has the bicolor design which is unique in pansies. This particular variety was named after the Morpho butterfly which is blue and yellow, as is this flower.

There are many excellent varieties of pansies available that produce large flowers and vigorous plants, and some varieties are showing improved heat tolerance and will survive longer into the summer months.

Pansies work well planted into flower beds with well-drained soil, and are wonderful grown in containers. Plants can be rejuvenated by cutting them back, which will also result in a new flush of blooms. Pansies also do well with being fertilized in the springtime.

By Mary Kroening, State Master Gardener Coordinator