

Containerized Trees: Small Spaced Landscaping / Big Effects

Part Two: The Right Tree in the Right Place with the Right Care

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Part One of this two-part series gave an overview of the importance of site and choice of container for planting a containerized tree. Part Two continues the discussion with pointers on tree selection, tips on planting and guidelines for maintenance.

Tree Selection

Think of a containerized tree the same way you would when adding a tree to your landscape. The same requirements for sunlight exposure and moisture apply. If you can plant it outside, then you should be able to grow it in a container. The chart below identifies some hardy candidates for a containerized tree.

Type	Options	Special Considerations
Citrus	Lemon, Lime, Kumquat, Orange and Tangerine	Frost tender. In winter, move inside or to greenhouse
Fig	Edible Fig (<i>Ficus carica</i>)	Requires consistent Zone 7 climate for outside growth Plan to move inside for winter
Japanese Maples	(<i>Acer palmatum</i>) Spectacular fall foliage	Requires large container for root development Locate in area with both full sun and shade
Olive	European Olive (<i>Olea europaea</i>) Choose fruitless variety to avoid oily fruit cleanup	Requires consistent Zone 7 climate for outside growth Plan to move inside for winter Prune regularly to limit height
Privet	Good selection for topiary treatment (<i>Ligustrum spp.</i>)	Grows prolifically and can be invasive Prune regularly
Southern Magnolia	Good choice for balcony tree. (<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>)	Requires very large container and sufficient vertical space (10 feet) to grow Requires consistent Zone 7 climate
Sweet Bay	Produces culinary bay leaves (<i>Laurus nobilis</i>)	Requires full sun to partial shade Bring indoors in winter
Witch Hazel	Dependable late winter/early spring flowering tree (<i>Hamamelis spp</i>)	Grows well outside in Virginia year-round with full sun to part shade Prune regularly to maintain height

Planting

Before planting, take a few minutes to think about what you are going to do. To make sure you plant the tree at the correct depth, look at the trunk to find the root flare. This is the place where the trunk meets the root base. Using the trunk flare as the baseline for planting, plant the tree so the trunk is level with the soil and the roots are covered. Now look at the commercial packaging provided for the tree. Remove any synthetic or plastic wrapping and cut away wire and twine wrapped around the trunk. Natural burlap can remain in place as it will biodegrade. Examine the root ball to check for circling roots. Open the root ball and pull roots firmly into an outward position. At this point, quickly move the tree to the container to keep roots from drying out. Add enough soil to determine the proper height. Then fill in the rest of the container

with soil, making sure the tree is firmly in place. Water thoroughly until the water runs out of the drainage holes.

Maintenance

Provide maintenance for the tree following specific grower guidelines. Water only as needed and avoid over-watering. Test the soil surface to make sure it is thoroughly dry to a depth of 1 inch before adding more water. Water completely until excess runs out through the drainage holes. Fertilize as required for the specific trees, using a water-soluble fertilizer according to package directions. If the leaves are green and glossy, the tree is adequately nourished. Pruning is an essential part of maintaining containerized trees. Plan to prune at least once a year to prevent the root system from exceeding the capacity of the container.

Growing containerized trees can be interesting and fun. Just follow the guidelines for site, container and tree selection, plant carefully and maintain regularly. You will be delighted for years.

Resources

- *Trees for Landscape Containers and Planters*, Bonnie Appleton et al, Cooperative Extension, Publication 430-023
- *Growing Fruit Crops in Containers*, Jeffrey G. Williamson, University of Florida IFAS Extension, Publication # HS57
- *10 Top Trees to Grow in Containers*, Lauren Dunec Hoang, April 9, 2018
- *Growing Trees in Containers*, Ellen Zachos, National Gardening Association, Learning Library