

Shade Trees in Osceola

Trees provide great environmental benefits; they provide oxygen and cooling shade, reduce noise and wind speed, block nosy neighbors and reduce soil erosion. Some things to consider before planting a tree are; the purpose the tree will serve, drought tolerance, growth rate, maintenance requirements and size at maturity. Trees are classified based on their size at maturity into small, medium, and large. Planting the right plant at the right place for the right reason cannot be overemphasized.

Driving around the urban areas of Osceola County, you will quickly realize that there are many trees planted incorrectly at various sites. For instance, large oak trees are planted less than 15 feet from structures such as drive way, buildings, plumbing fixtures and roadways. These tree roots often damage structures by growing underneath and causing them to crack, which may result in expensive repairs. When tree roots interfere with structures, sometimes the best remedy is to remove the tree. Most people are not happy with this option. In some cases, the roots can be pruned and an in-ground barrier placed about 3 feet deep. Pruning more than 25% of roots can compromise the tree's ability to withstand sustained wind. We often spend a lot of resources to repair the structures instead of focusing on the problem tree. Trees planted too close to buildings also create security risk by providing hide-outs for unscrupulous persons, especially at night; they can lay wait on property owners and attack them.

In addition, it is important to prune tree canopies that are hanging too low to the side walk; a 7 feet clearance is adequate. Canopies growing too close to the sidewalk or road way will impede pedestrians and get in contact with moving vehicles if hanging over the street. Planting large trees under a utility line is also a common malpractice. Large trees, grown under power lines, require frequent pruning, decrease the life span of the trees, increases labor cost, and increases the potential for the tree to encounter live wires, which may result in electrocution. Another tree planting mistake is to install trees that produce fruit/berries too close to the sidewalk. Ripe fruits on the ground can cause pedestrians to slip and fall. They also create a mess on sidewalks and harbor birds which passes out their droppings on the sidewalk.

A word to the wise. Avoid over-pruning the tree canopy. Trees that are over-pruned become weak, attract insect pests and diseases, lose their shape, and generally require more maintenance. To help you select the right tree for the right place, get a free copy of The Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Guide to Plant selection and Landscape Design. It is available online or in hard copy at your local UF/IFAS Extension office.

For more information on trees and other related topics, contact Grantly Ricketts with UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola at 321-697-3000 or email gricketts@ufl.edu.