

“Ask The Plant Groom”™ by Dale Groom, The Plant Groom™

For: QA1043

Is it the right time to plant spring bulbs? – G. H.

Dec. is usually a better time for most spring blooming bulbs.

We are thinking about using a live tree in a container for our Christmas tree this year and then plant it in our landscape. What trees work best for this? - D. K.

Our first experience in doing what you suggest was with a tree selected by our son Aaron. He and I narrowed the possibilities at a local nursery and he selected a Leyland Cypress.

Today we have a row of (6) Leyland cypress and utilize them as a screen. They're one of our favorite evergreen trees and will grow in alkaline or acidic soils. The tree's looks are similar to our native cedar tree but soft to the touch.

Sheared hollies and pine will also work. Most hollies will grow state wide while some pines will also while others will not grow well in alkaline soils. Japanese Black Pine and Afghan Pine are two that will grow in alkaline soils.

Bottom line? Look at plants that have the shape you wish to utilize for decorating, ask questions regarding normal height and width in your location and if it will do well long term. After securing this information make the decision to move forward or go another route.

Should you decide to purchase and use a live container grown tree selection and plant in the landscape here's a few tips:

- Purchase the most healthy and full selection available.
- Thoroughly water the plant's root ball prior to bringing indoors
- Apply an antitranspirant to the plant's entire foliage and allow to dry
- Place a section of seat plastic in the display location with a non porous saucer properly sized for the tree's container, pull the plastic above the container and secure and decorate as desired. It's best to minimize the use of lights due to their heat and drying effect on foliage.

- Check soil with your finger and keep moist.
- Install properly in the landscape as soon as the “big day” is over

Note: It’s best to limit any tree or shrub to two weeks indoors.

Good luck and be sure to let me know what you finally selected.

I’m looking for a plant to use in our office near my desk. The area is totally lit by artificial light. What do you recommend? - H. M.

Two of the very best tropical plants for the situation you have are Chinese Evergreen(Aglaonema) and Closet Plant(Spathyllium). Both of these puppies may be maintained long term in low light locations and total artificial light.

I have one each of these plants. Both have been in my office for two years and look well. Try them ‘cause I believe you’ll like ‘em.

Dale’s Notes:

- This is prime time of the year to install hardy shrubs and trees in the landscape.
- Look at the possibility of securing “gardening” related items as gifts for your favorite gardeners this coming season.
- After the first killing freeze/frost remove dead tops of herbaceous perennials and add to a compost pile
- The dormant season occurs after our first hard freeze and remains in effect until new growth begins in the spring. This is “the” time of year to transplant existing woody plants and install new bare root plants.
- Check all houseplants setting outside for insect pests now. If found be sure to eliminate the pests prior to bringing your plants indoors
- Remember, during cool dry conditions our landscape should be checked for soil moisture and if required, irrigated

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