

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
By Bill Arndorfer
Grundy County Extension Education Director
August 29, 2008

Would you like to plant trees and shrubs yet this late summer or early fall? If so, you still have time. Mid-August through mid-September is a good time to plant trees, shrubs, perennials and spring-flowering bulbs.

Evergreens such as pine and spruce respond well to a mid-August through September planting. Delaying planting into late October may not give them enough time to become established before winter begins and could result in desiccation, injury or death. Trees and shrubs that drop their leaves in the fall (deciduous trees) can be planted from August through early November. Balled, burlapped and container grown trees and shrubs can also be planted in late summer and fall. However, not all trees respond well to fall planting. Trees that are best planted in the spring include fir, birch, yellowwood, ginkgo, magnolia, ornamental pear, oak and hemlock.

Late summer or early fall planted trees should be watered every seven to ten days during dry weather. Continue watering until the ground freezes. It is important to water trees and shrubs deeply (throughout the root zone) but infrequently (not more than once a week or so) particularly during dry periods to help minimize stress. Also, three inches of organic mulch over the root zone can help to conserve soil moisture and moderate soil temperature. An added benefit will be that it discourages mowing too closely to the trunk.

Late summer/early fall is also an excellent time to plant many perennials. It is a good time to move or divide perennials such as peony, daylily, garden phlox and Oriental poppy. Perennials planted in late summer or early fall should be mulched with four to six inches of straw, pine needles or other materials in late fall. Mulching helps prevent repeated freezing and thawing of the soil that can heave plants out of the ground. It also limits drying of the exposed plant crowns and roots which can cause severe damage or death.

October is the ideal time to plant tulips, daffodils and other spring flowering bulbs. For maximum visual effect, it is suggested to plant bulbs in groups or clusters. Bulbs that are planted individually or in single rows are generally not as visually pleasing. Spring flowering bulbs can be planted as late as December if the ground remains unfrozen.

Now that you've decided to do some planting, take a little more time and plan to do it right. Ask yourself these questions: is this site the proper location for the plant? When selecting trees, have I looked up and around the site to see what interferences may exist for the size of tree chosen? Would another choice be better? What is the proper planting procedure for the tree or plant that I have chosen? For specific answers to your late summer or fall planting questions, please call the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.