

Tree Planting and Care

By Larry Caplan, Extension Horticulture Educator, Vanderburgh County, IN

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Fall is the best time for planting trees and shrubs. The air is cool, but the soil is still warm: a perfect combination for root growth. And happy roots mean happy trees!

This Saturday, November 19, there will be a free workshop on the planting and care of trees at the Central Branch of the Evansville Public Library, located at 200 SE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd. The workshop, which runs from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, is sponsored by Keep Evansville Beautiful.

Evansville City Arborist Shawn Dickerson and I will present several topics that will help homeowners have greater success with the trees they plant this fall including:

- * Right Tree, Right Place
- * Proper Tree Planting
- * Tree Pruning
- * Preparing Landscape Plants for Winter
- * Update on Emerald Ash Borer

Refreshments and door prizes will be provided. The program is free, but to make sure we have enough supplies, we ask that you register no later than Wednesday by contacting Keep Evansville Beautiful at 812-425-4461, or by email at mmcgarrah@keepevansvillebeautiful.org.

At the risk of repeating myself from last week's column: it's very, very dry out there! I was visiting a property just last week, trying to diagnose why a row of spruce trees and assorted other trees were in decline. In order to prove to the nice lady about how hard and dry the soil was, I grabbed my trusty soil probe and tried to pull up a core of soil from the root zone. I wasn't able to.

As the accompanying photograph shows, even despite my impressive use of Earth's gravity, I was unable to drive the hollow rod more than one inch into the soil. Now folks, if I can't push a steel probe into the soil with two hundred and (mumble, mumble) pounds of force behind it, how can you expect those poor, delicate tree roots to get through?

Yes, I realize water is expensive. But buying new trees is even more expensive. Add to that needing to wait several years for the trees to grow to a shade-delivering size.

While nobody from the National Weather Service is using the word "drought" yet, we really haven't had significant rain in Evansville since late July. This dry spell is probably behind why

the fall color has been rather muted this year. Unless the weather changes, or unless property owners supply the needed water, it's possible that we're going to start seeing more stress and decline in our trees in 2017.

For more information on tree care, please contact the Purdue Extension Service at (812) 435-5287.

