

LCIP Member planting tips, techniques and thoughts for your planting

When a person plants new trees and shrubs it often takes several disappointments before the success rate goes up. This is because there are several herbivores waiting to taste those tender plants that were so kindly planted by unsuspecting humans. I always make the hole that will receive the new seedling deeper than the surrounding soil. Even after the seedling is planted and soil around it is well firmed. That depression with the seedling in it should be deeper than the surrounding soil. This is to hold water like a little reservoir around the seedling. It will hold water not only right after planting but for the rest of the summer and even the next summer if we are having dry spells. This also starts the new seedling out without having to compete with grasses and other small plants right next to it. While watering during the summer pull new weeds and grasses that are trying to win back the soil in that depression.

You can avoid a lot of disappointment if you protect the seedling from mice. Next winter the mice will be hungry, and the stem of the new seedling has just what it is looking for. Hardware cloth can be purchased and cut to make small 7- 8-inch-high little protectors around the seedling. Plastic tree guards cut to fit are available at most nurseries and hardware cloth at a hardware store or building center. It is good to put these on right after planting as they make the plants easier to find as the summer wears on and there are other things to do in the fall and you might forget to do this later. The mice start looking for small woody vegetation as early as September. I have also used the tall tree protectors, but I cut them in lengths of 8-10 inches. It is truly disappointing to hurry out come spring to see how the seedlings made it through the winter only to find the mice chewed the bark off them (girdled them) and they will die soon.

The next protection should be from rabbits. They also think you planted these tender seedlings for them. I use a 2 - 3-foot fence made of chicken wire or poultry mesh. Hardware stores or building centers carry it in 2 - 3-foot widths. You should hold the fence in place with stakes of steel or wood. Hardware stores and building center often sell them or nurseries do too. Leonard also sell plastic rods and bamboo rods which both work well. I have used dowel rods, but they last only 2 or 3 years before they rot off.

And if you have deer problem, put up a 6-foot welded wire fence to protect the plants now and in the future. Purchase a roll of 6-foot-high of welded wire and a 6' steel fence post for each seedling. Pound the fence post in (a fence pounder works well. Attach the welded wire to the post with a piece of wire. You could delay using the welded wire fence if the poultry fence is taller than the seedling but eventually the seedling will grow taller than the rabbit fence and then the taller welded wire fence will be needed.

If you are a gambler you could use only the mouse and rabbit fence and protect from the deer by using a chemical/deer repellent spray on the seedlings, but you must follow the directions explicitly. The chemical I use calls for spraying the plants weekly for 3 or 4 weeks and then monthly until fall.

Don't plant near trails, other food sources or in rows. When you want ten of something and they cost a dollar each, plant thirty. Make loose brush piles then plant in them.