Planting Trees in the Fall

Cody Miller
Phillips-Rooks District Extension Agent
Agriculture and Natural Resources

I have been asked several times throughout the years, when is the best time to plant trees in our area? The fall season can be an excellent time to plant trees. During the spring, soils are cold and may be so wet that low oxygen levels inhibit root growth. The warm and moist soils associated with fall encourage root growth. Fall root growth means the tree becomes established well before a spring-planted tree and is better able to withstand summer stresses.

Fall-planted trees require some special care. Remember, that roots are actively growing even though the top is dormant. Make sure the soil stays moist but not soggy. This may require watering not only in the fall but also during the winter months if we experience warm spells that dry the soil. Mulch also is helpful because it minimizes moisture loss and slows the cooling of the soil so root growth continues as long as possible. Evergreens should be moved earlier in the fall than deciduous plants. They need at least six weeks before the ground freezes for the roots to become established.

It is always important to plant the right plant in the right place. We have many great options for trees to be planted in our area. I always like to refer homeowners and producers to a publication that was developed by Holly Dickman who is the former Ellis County Horticulture agent, it is titled Drought Tolerant Plants – For Northwest Kansas.

For more information on this and other topics, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.