

TRANSPLANTING THE WILD

by Steve Farnsworth

(A summary of a talk given at the 3rd annual FNPS Conference)

Transplanting from the wild is not something that should be encouraged, but it is an acceptable practice under certain conditions.

Drawbacks of transplanting are:

1. Most plants moved by amateurs die, generally because the root system is mangled, the top is not cut back enough, the plant isn't watered properly or given good aftercare, or a combination of these three mistakes. A person has to know what they are doing in order to transplant successfully.
2. Transplanted plants often suffer from "transplant shock," taking up to one year to recover and resume growth.
3. Transplanting may not be cost effective. When a dollar value is put on time consumed, transportation costs, aftercare, and lost growth due to transplant shock, buying containerized stock is often cheaper.
4. Every time a plant is removed, the natural plant community is disturbed and diminished.

Situations under which transplanting may be desirable are:

1. Plants are being destroyed by development and construction. Concentrate efforts on plants most likely to survive transplanting.
2. Past planting mistakes can be corrected on your property by moving a plant to a better location.
3. Newly-germinated seedlings may be dug up when a seed crop is missed or unharvestable. Natural survival of seedlings is low, and when a large number of seedlings are present, removal of a few has little effect.
4. Plant is unavailable from nurseries and attempts at growing from seed fail.

Once the decision to transplant or not has been made, a pre-dig checklist

of questions need to be answered:

1. Has the permission of the property owner been acquired as well as a permit from the state division of Plant Industry if the plant is classified as an endangered species? State laws require this.

2. Will removal of plant(s) have a significant impact on the plant community? If so, don't transplant.

3. Can the plant survive in the new location? Many plants have specific requirements and will grow only in the correct habitat.

4. Can an adequate rootball be obtained? Plants growing in porous limestone or deep sands are difficult to dig and move with a good root system.

5. Is it the right time of year? Winter is the best time for transplanting in North and Central Florida; in South Florida, transplant deciduous trees in winter, evergreens during the summer rainy season.

If the right answers are given to these questions, go ahead with transplanting, following these suggestions:

1. Choose the proper size plant, remembering that usually the smaller the plant, the greater the survival rate. Don't try to move plants larger than three to four feet tall without special equipment.
2. Dig an adequate rootball, as wide as the plant's canopy and as deep as necessary.
3. Cut back and thin out the top the same percentage as the amount of root system lost in digging.
4. After planting, water the plant thoroughly, saturating the soil and eliminating air pockets. Continue to water once or twice a week until the plant is established unless there is adequate rain. Water either by constructing a shallow basin around the plant and filling it with water, or by turning a hose on to a trickle and leaving it at the base of the plant for a half-hour or so.



Over 200 people turned out to hear Dave Wilson offer advice on turning your town on to native trees and shrubs.

Bill Partington