



# TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

## *How do I care for my tree?*

Quality trees begin in the nursery. Many problems that ail trees in the landscape can be reduced simply by selecting quality nursery trees. Some states in the US, such as Florida, have adopted tree nursery standards. These nursery standards refer to quality and trees must meet certain criteria to be placed in each quality category. With or without nursery standards, there are several things you can look for in the tree you are about to buy to insure that you are purchasing a quality tree.

Many tree defects that cause issues in the future can be mitigated or even eliminated by simply choosing quality nursery trees. Good trunk and branch structure can easily be seen on a tree and by choosing a tree with good architecture you are minimizing the chances of that tree failing in the future. Trees with multiple dominant “leaders” or main trunks should be avoided. These co-dominant stems are comparatively weak, can grow against each other and cause the trunk to crack in the future.

After selecting a tree with good branch and trunk structure, look at the root system. While this is not the easiest part of a tree to inspect, choosing a tree with a quality root system can give the tree a greater life expectancy. Often, trees grown in containers will have circling roots. This occurs when the tree roots hit the container wall as they grow and begin to encircle the inside. When the tree is removed from the container, the roots continue growing in the same orientation. A circling root structure leads to a tree that isn’t anchored well to the ground. This can cause uprooting and tipping over of the tree in high winds. Circling roots also lead to

## **Quality Trees Begin in the Nursery**

vascular problems. Tree roots take in water which travels through a vascular highway from the roots, up the trunk and eventually out of the leaves. As the tree trunk and roots grow and increase in diameter, the trunk will be squeezed by these circling roots. This can eventually lead to tree failure and death. Many circling root problems can be mitigated at planting by slicing the root ball to remove circling roots (see [Technical Tree Solutions - Correcting Circling Roots](#)). However, some circling root issues may be nearly impossible to correct. Avoiding this issue when selecting a tree can save you trouble and help you grow a strong and long-lived tree.

With a little knowledge of what to look for when shopping for a tree, you can have a quality landscape tree simply by choosing a quality nursery tree.

