

Yards to Paradise

By Max Phelps

Go Bare Root and Save Money on Landscaping

If you've ever ordered a mail-order fruit tree from Stark Brothers or any of dozens of other nurseries, you may have wondered if the three foot long stick with a bunch of roots really would live, and grow to become the fruiting tree you saw pictured in their catalog. I can assure you, most of the time, with proper care, it will.

It is possible to completely landscape a new home with bare root plants if one is not too concerned about how they will look for the first couple years, and you can save a good deal of money on the plants and the digging will be easier at planting time. Even those not quite convinced can plant a few big balled-and-burlapped trees, and fill in the other planting spots with bare root trees and shrubbery for substantial savings.

A three foot tall 'stick' can grow into a ten foot tall silver maple tree within 18 months, for instance. That ten foot tall tree would cost \$75 to \$175 in a large black spot, and from \$45 to \$120 as a B&B tree. That little bare root tree will cost you under \$10 in most cases, and perhaps under \$5 if you buy a minimum order of perhaps \$100. So, that would be one big tree with great looks from a local garden center—or 20 three foot tall trees that don't look so great at the moment from a nursery or mail-order company. The choice is yours of course, but I wanted to explain to perhaps that new homeowner that they can sure save a ton of money by choosing to plant bare root trees.

If this all sounds difficult, most nurseries are in the habit of shipping clear and precise planting instructions with diagrams along with your new plants. But, even if you decide to hire a landscaper, it will still be more economical to purchase bare root plants.

Price is a major reason why someone would decide to order and plant bare root trees. Limited funds can go a lot further. (Even if you bought 20 bare root trees and had a couple not make it, think how much you still saved.)

Diversity is another reason to go bare root. Let's say you want a couple pawpaw trees, maybe some fir trees, perhaps a privet hedge or 5 colors of lilacs. It could be you have thought of a tree you want and no nursery you ever shop at has it: Kentucky Coffee Tree comes to mind. I guarantee you somebody will sell and ship it to you wrapped in plastic and enclosed in a cardboard box. Another example might be some unique dogwood like pagoda dogwood, giant dogwood, evergreen dogwood or Cornelian cherry dogwood. FedEx, UPS and the USPS carry such packages all the time.

Availability is a related subject. A local garden center may carry 20 different kinds of trees and perhaps twice that many shrubs in pots or in burlap. But, when there exists thousands of trees one might easily plant and grow successfully, ordering them with no dirt on the roots can make sense. (In fact, some states won't allow potted plants of certain kinds to be shipped, but may allow bare root plants to cross it's borders. The issue is soil born pathogens that might spread diseases. Puerto Rico is an example where they can order bare root from Americans, but not with dirt on the roots.

The US Forest Service often plants pine trees on areas that have been logged clean or that have had a devastating forest fire. They never use potted trees or balled and burlapped trees. They use little seedling trees maybe a foot or two feet tall.

And ten years later...there is a new pine forest! I believe one could obtain additional useful information from the

USFS on this subject.

It costs a lot less to ship trees minus the dirt. A tractor trailer load of trees might be 300 with dirt on the roots, but thousands could be shipped for the same freight bill if they were bare rooted.

Planting a small tree with a few roots dangling below the 'stick' sure is easier than digging a hole three feet wide and deep for a \$175 tree from the local garden center too. Anybody can do it. Ofcourse, some kinds of plants have better success rates than others. Regardless, I usually have close to 100% success myself.

Bare root trees and shrubs can only be dug during late fall and winter. Growers of this type liner or fruit material typically sort, grade and store in special cold storage houses. They can sell until they have sold out, or until hot weather, perhaps in May. Any trees not sold as bare root will have to be potted up or will have to be taken back to the fields and replanted by the nursery and grow them another year. (Otherwise they die and potential profits are lost.) And, for you, it's necessary to order bare root plants during the fall or winter or early spring so that you can plant them before the weather gets terribly hot or dry.

Planting of bare root trees is where some get worried. But, if you're planting thousands like the forest service, you put your tool in the ground, stick the plant in, and remove your tool. That's pretty much it. But, if it's an apple tree or a pear tree that is six feet tall, you may want to go to some more trouble. Just dig a hole like for any other tree, add a small amount of soil amendments to the planting hole, perhaps a fertilizer tablet or two that won't burn the roots, and leave the surface with a bit of a bowl effect to funnel rain or water from your hose towards the trunk of the new tree. Again, there are directions shipped with a package of trees—read them.

Water your new trees until the ground is soupy wet. Most of the time, deciduous trees that are planted bare-root do not need to be staked. (Another savings.)

Just like when you buy and plant a big tree at a garden center that is wrapped in burlap, you need to prune some on the limbs. One reason a large B&B tree does poorly the first couple seasons is because many roots got cut when it was dug, but nobody wants to take their new tree and cut half it's branches off! (They would be happier three or five years later if they did though). So, on your new bare root tree, trim off any broken or mis-placed limbs with sharp pruning shears. The more you remove the faster the little tree will take off growing. I would also add that removing broken roots, or extra-long roots may be desirable before you plant—just don't cut off the taproot if it has one—you know, that big root that goes straight down.

Bare root trees should be planted soon as possible when you receive them. Do not let them get too hot, too cold or the roots too dry. (But, don't think of putting the roots in a bucket of water and leaving them overnight either!)

If it will be days or weeks before you can plant your new bare root stock, "heel" them in somewhere. (This consists of planting the wad or bundle of trees in some soil, preferably in the shade outdoors somewhere in some loose topsoil.) You can take them up and plant when you are ready—hopefully before they leaf out in the spring though, as that will lessen their chances of survival.

The biggest down side to bare root tree planting is that you begin with a smaller size and have to be patient.

Like any other tree, it's smart to wrap the trunks or stems of your new bare root plants to keep the sun and

varmints from harming the trunk of the new tree. Adding some mulch is also good...just don't put a bunch of fresh mulch up against the trunk of your new tree, keep it an inch or two away from the stems.

We could elaborate all day on this topic. But what I really wanted to do was to get the reader to think of an option for landscaping on a budget that they may not have considered previously. Bigger plant selections, lower costs: those are two good reasons to consider doing some or most of your plantings without the dirt, and skipping the high costs you'll pay at a garden center.

The author is a landscaper. Feedback welcome. Contact Max: info@rockcastles.net

Mamaw's Kitchen

By Regina Poynter Hoskins

STUFFED CHERRY TOMATOES

24 cherry tomatoes
1 small box (3 ounce) cream cheese, softened
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 cup tuna, well drained
2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil
2 tablespoons chopped capers
2 tablespoons chopped cucumber
1 tablespoon chopped black olives (optional)
Cut tomatoes in half. Hollow out insides with small spoon. Place tomatoes, cut sides down, on a plate lined with paper towels. In a bowl, mix cream cheese, lemon juice, tuna, basil, ca-

pers, cucumber, and olives (if desired). Cover and chill for 10 minutes. To stuff tomatoes, spoon filling into a zip lock bag. Snip off a corner and pipe filling into tomatoes.

TOMATOES WITH BUTTERMILK VINAIGRETTE

3/4 cup buttermilk
1/4 cup white wine vinegar
3 tablespoons canola oil
1 or 2 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds
1/2 teaspoon celery salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
4 pounds grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup minced green onion
In a small bowl, whisk the first ingredients until blended. Refrigerate, cov-

ered, until serving. Just before serving, arrange tomatoes on a platter; sprinkle with salt and drizzle with vinaigrette. Sprinkle with green onions.

CUCUMBER SALAD WITH TOMATOES

3 medium cucumbers, peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick
1 medium onion, sliced and separated into rings
3 cups cherry tomatoes, halved
1/2 cup vinegar
1/4 cup sugar
1 cup water
2 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon fresh coarse ground black pepper
1/4 cup oil

Combine ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Refrigerate at least 2 hours. Drain before serving.



The 10U Knights have captured two more championships. The Knights went undefeated in pool play and tournament action in Russell Springs. They defeated Lake Cumberland in the championship to become Southern KY Baseball Classic 10-year-old champs. The team went undefeated again in pool play and tournament action in Danville. They defeated the Bluegrass Bats in the championship game to become "City of First" 10-year-old champs. Team members pictured above, from left: Noah Fain, Landon Gentry, Ethan Fain, Chance Dismuke, Kole Brown, Silas Shaffer, Drew Hopkins, Rylee Denney, Nathan Storie, Hunter Spivey, Jaden Carpenter, Jacob Hunt and Trevor Downs. The team is coached by Mikhael Shaffer, Johnny Hopkins, David Fain and Eric Denney. Photo taken by Selena Mink.



Congratulations to all of the girls that competed in the 2013 Rockcastle County Little League Fast Pitch softball season at Brodhead.

Rockcastle County High School

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