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THE "VITACARE" COMPANY
MORGAN TREE SERVICE

“How Big . . . ?”

Very frequently, as I visit with area property owners about their trees and their landscape, I get a question that seems to pop up over and over. We might have been talking about needing more trees on the site or maybe it will have been an after-thought concern with providing some more shade for the patio. And then here it comes again:

“How big a tree can I plant there?” he says.

And not-so-subtly implied in the question is the idea that *bigger is better*. It suggests that maximum shade - and fast - is the way to go. But very often it is not the way to go at all.

First, there is for most people a real limit on the size tree that can be installed on a site. That limit is commonly a function of 1) cost and 2) physical limitations of available equipment. Eight to ten (8"-10") inch trees can be installed in a back year with a large tree spade. And of course, even larger trees can be theoretically installed using a lot of prep, a low-

boy and crane equipment. . . and a lot of money.



But there is another potentially important aspect to “How big?” It is the matter of survivability and performance. If a tree comes in on a tree spade, it may be a 4" tree or it could be a 10" tree, depending upon what the owner has ordered and purchased. But whichever it is, the same size root ball is coming in with both of them and that can make a very big difference.

But all things being equal, the idea is to come in with as much root system relative to trunk size as possible.

Assume two sizes of trees (large and smaller) both with an X-diameter root ball. The smaller tree is generally going to establish faster and start grow-

ing both sooner and faster with a higher prognosis for vitality and appearance.

The reason is obvious; the large tree coming in with only a partial root system is going to have to sit in the hole for a time - maybe a couple of years - using available sugar energy just rebuilding its roots and surviving before it can start to grow. And its risk of having trouble in that time is elevated.

Of course *when* (time of year) and *how* planting happens (another subject) can also be critical. But all things being equal, the idea is to come in with as much root system relative to trunk size as possible. So if you're thinking of planting a new tree, it may be well to ask your provider about these things. A common though not universal warranty on new trees is one calendar year. After that, it's yours.

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