**Trees Are Good –Planting a Tree (Week 4)**

**Segment for Week of Aug 17, 2020**

This is Julie Callahan with information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. This week is Part 4 of the program “Trees are Good.” I have covered the benefits of trees and how to select the right tree for your situation. This week I give you some pointers on how to plant it.

After purchasing your tree, it needs to be planted as soon as possible. If this is not possible, place it in a shady or sheltered spot and keep it watered.

To plant the tree, dig a hole three to five times as wide as the plant’s root ball. Fill the hole with water and wait for it to drain through. If there is still water in the hole after 24 hours, find another location. Do not dig too deep; once the plant is placed in the hole, the top of the roots or root ball should be level or slightly above the surface of the ground. Remove tags, wires, or ropes from the stems or trunk.

For container-grown plants, ease the pot off without disturbing the root ball, cut any circling roots, then place the root ball in the hole. If the root ball is wrapped in burlap, place it in the hole before removing the covering. Then, pull the burlap down and leave it in the bottom of the hole. Do not attempt to pull the burlap from under the plant –– this could damage the root ball.

When replacing the soil, do not add organic matter. Instead, if the original soil contains too much rock or debris, replace it with local topsoil. When the hole is about three fourths refilled, straighten and level the tree, tamp the soil down carefully, water heavily, and wait for it to soak in. Then, fill the hole with remaining soil to its original level, adding a slow-release fertilizer, preferably 25 to 50 percent water-insoluble nitrogen. Use excess soil to build a berm or ring 6 to 10 inches from the outside edge of the hole and water heavily again.

Unless the tree is top heavy or on an exposed site, it should not be staked. If staking is needed, drive three stakes into firm soil around the tree, connecting them to the trunk with flexible straps. Remove the stakes and straps after one growing season.

Add two or three inches of mulch around the plant to prevent water loss and to keep lawn mowers and string trimmers from getting too close to the trunk. Avoid creating what is referred to as a “mulch volcano” by piling the mulch up against the trunk. This promotes shallow roots, disease, and pest injury.

For more information on planting trees, go to the VA Cooperative Extension Publications. You can also call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office.

Here in xx, I recorded xx inches of rain this past week. Don’t forget to keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered during the hot summer months.