

For Tree Tips column on April 24, 1998  
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### **SELECTING A HEALTHY TREE**

When choosing trees at the nursery or garden center, be sure to select a high quality product. The points to look for in a dormant deciduous tree (one that loses its leaves during the winter), five feet or more in height.

As a general rule, the tree should have good, green twigs and plump buds. It is best to purchase trees that are still dormant rather than those that have leafed out and may be operating on limited energy reserves. Choose those trees with good branch structure and distribution. Do not purchase trees that are “top heavy” with the majority of the side branches already pruned off. These trees will have less leaves to produce food for the tree during that first critical year. Pick the tree that has more branches because this tree will produce more leaves.

Check to make sure the soil is damp. Do not buy trees where the attendant has allowed the soil to dry out. This will mean dead roots. Also purchase trees where the plants have been protected from the direct rays of the sun and are not set out in the open with concrete all around the containers. This will cause the black containers to heat up and again this could cause dead roots.

Being selective and knowing what to look for in a healthy tree can mean bringing home a tree that will start off to a healthy vigorous start compared to one that will struggle and may eventually die (after the one year warranty)!