

Planning Your Spring Landscaping

How close to my home can I plant?

Many of us are starting to plan out our spring gardens and landscaping. If your ideas this year include planting a new tree or large shrub next to your home, then planning ahead is *especially* important. Plants trees and shrubs are a great addition to your property and they are beautiful, but every plant or tree is different and has different needs in order to thrive--and maybe most importantly--every plant has a unique requirement for space. They certainly need room to grow. We can't just plant them anywhere, and we need to account for their adult size when choosing their location on our property. Here are some things to consider when planting shrubs or trees around your home:

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1 Why does it matter where we plant trees? Tree roots can cause varying degrees of structural damage to your home depending on the proximity to the dwelling and the type of tree. You'll want to read up on whether the tree you are planting has an aggressive root system, like a Ficus tree, for example.

2 Tree roots can sometimes cause plumbing problems. Unfortunately, aggressive root systems can bore through older, brittle plumbing components like cast iron and clay that are under your home. Large roots can also crush plumbing components. Repairs for this type of damage can be costly.

3 Roots can damage walkways and driveways. Root systems that heave walkways and driveways not only cause concrete and asphalt damage, but also create a "trip hazard" due to uneven surfaces.

4 Avoid planting shrubbery too close to your home. The biggest problem seen with regard to shrubbery growing on the structure is "moisture." Shrubby that is in contact with the structure can be a conducive termite condition as well as a key factor in siding deterioration whether it be stucco, or composition material.

5 Moisture & Termites. Trees, shrubbery, and plants are organic "cellulose based" organisms. Termites eat cellulose. So whenever you plant anything close to the structure, it is important to consider the possibility that you may be planting a food source for termites. And because termites are migratory, your house could be the next stop.

6 Drainage Problems at the Foundation. Water is probably the single most important factor in structural deterioration. The best way to avoid structural deterioration due to

water is to keep the dwelling dry. Landscaping is an important component to help achieve a dry house. Doing it properly helps to assure that excess water is soaked up by plants, shrubs, trees, and lawn. Properties with poorly maintained landscaping are more susceptible to water penetration issues.

7 Over-hanging Trees & Gutters. Properly installed gutters and downspouts are a key factor in water diversion. Faulty gutters or downspouts that drain water too close to the foundation will contribute to "water wicking" into the foundation and foundation walls. Trees with limbs that overhang roofs can also be a source of contributing water damage. Debris from overhanging trees that accumulates on roofing material will cause pre-mature deterioration. In addition, if an overhanging tree limbs break and contacts the roof or structure, severe damage can occur.