

Hort Expert: Get To The 'Root' Of A Plant's Ills

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roots are left in the nursery when the root ball is bagged or placed in a container for sale. On top of that, if the plants are planted in already dry soil, irrigation management is absolutely key to the plant's survival.

have to regrow before any top-growth takes place.

A key would be to plant more drought-resistant species, which include green ash, sweetgum, Baldy press, Zelkova, and others, but you "have to take these lists with a large grain of salt," he said. Ir-

“They intoxicate themselves with work so they won't see how they really are.”

— Aldous Huxley

Landscape managers and homeowners have to get on the "same page," Bates noted, to help provide an interface for the plant between the container media and the native soil.

"We need to be aware of water management in those issues," Bates noted. "The loss of the root system is of major concern in establishment of container stock."

The next issue is transplant shock. The root-to-shoot ratio has to be re-established. The more severe the roots are cut, the harder it will be to re-establish them. The roots will

irrigation management is still critical.

Start with good soil loam, good soil moisture retention, protection from wind, and other factors to help plant survivability in the landscape.

Bates noted that a one-gallon container shrub planted in the landscape requires watering every four days for the first four weeks after planting. After 21 weeks, the manager can water every 11 days.

What doesn't help are anti-desiccants or antitranspirants; fertilizing, because plants rely heavily on water; and pruning, which doesn't help the



Speakers at the PLNA drought workshop in late October included, from left, Rick Bates, Penn State horticulture department; Don Martin, Kutztown SBDC; Gregg Robertson, PLNA president; and Luke Eckley, Hortica Insurance agent. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor

plant, because plant buds actually promote root growth.

Also, a popular belief that a plant's roots will stretch out to

seek water is not true. Roots "don't proliferate in the absence of water," Bates noted,

but simply stop until moisture

returns. And root growth can take up to five weeks or more to resume after drying out.

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