



SOUND  
NATIVE  
PLANTS

## Why plant in the fall?

Plants installed in the fall usually outperform those installed in the late winter or spring. Planting projects scheduled for early October to mid-December are your best bet.

### **More root growth before the growing season**

It can take several months for roots to grow beyond the planting hole sufficiently to start absorbing moisture and nutrients from the native soil. Fall soil is warm and aerated and many plants actively grow roots during this time. Some species will continue root growth through our mild winters, and most begin their most vigorous root growth period in the late winter or early spring.

Fall transplants have this critical time for root extension *before* spring top growth takes off. Plants installed in the spring may hardly recover from transplant shock before the heavy demands of growth and summer drought are upon them.

### **Ideal transplanting weather**

The cool, cloudy days and frequent precipitation of fall and early winter provide ideal transplanting conditions. Until sufficient roots develop, newly installed plants will undergo transplant stress that can be exacerbated by warm, sunny days. Fall and winter weather allows for reduced transpiration and provides ample moisture for the roots while plants recover from transplant shock.

Fall is also the time that deciduous plants are entering dormancy. Their transpiration rates are slowing down, making them less susceptible to transplant shock. Also, if a plant's top growth is damaged during an autumn installation, it is less likely to set the plant back than in the spring when the plant is gearing up for the new growing season.

### **Overall**

Fall plantings enjoy advantages that are especially important for projects that will receive minimal maintenance and irrigation. The earlier plants go into the ground in the fall, the more time they have to recover from transplant shock, adapt to the site, and expand their root systems before the growing season. They will require less water and grow more vigorously than if they are planted in the spring.

In climates where the ground is frequently frozen several inches deep, it may make sense to delay planting until spring, but in western Washington we have perfect winters for plant establishment.

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