



TREE'S COMPANY

Installing a fully grown tree can add instant appeal to any landscape. And, although it is quite a logistical feat, it's well worth the effort, writes landscape designer Franchesca Watson

ONE OF THE GREAT PLEASURES

of being a landscape designer is occasionally installing an instant tree (or even a forest). There is nothing quite as exciting as witnessing the magical change that overcomes a raw landscape when a fully grown tree is added. Immediately the buildings come into scale; miraculously things seem human and natural; suddenly glamour arrives.

Obviously, there are ethical considerations, such as the carbon footprint of all that is involved in terms of machinery and energy. Was the tree ripped out of a natural landscape merely for human profit? Do the risks to its survival cancel out the instant gratification?

There are specialists who rescue trees from building sites or out of the paths of new roads. These trees are then transported back to nurseries, with as much root as humanly possible, where huge containers are made up to fit their particular root balls, allowing for a little further growth. They are cared for and stabilised for a

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year or two until they are functioning perfectly again and then installed into their new landscape, using cranes, with minimal further damage. When moved carefully, most of them don't look back and they can add considerable value to a property.

The trick is to select a specimen that is naturally adapted to your site – don't plant something that comes from a temperate shady situation in a boiling-hot north-facing garden. And don't put something delicate straight in the path of the wind. If you have selected a responsible operator, he probably won't let you do something so silly.

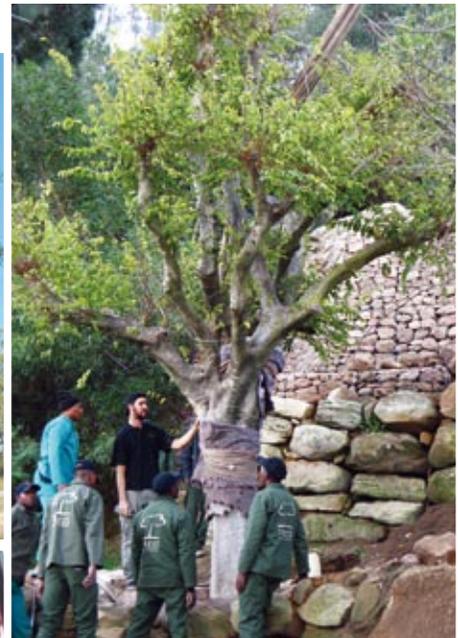
This process is not cheap. There is the basic price of the tree, which will include the original moving fee and its care over a number of years. Then there is the cost of the machinery (trucks, cranes and tree slings) and labour involved in getting the tree onto your property and planted

in position. The road outside may need to be partially or fully closed for a number of hours and a permit to do this must be obtained from the relevant authority.

Before quoting, a specialist will check whether it is possible to install the tree where you want it. Larger cranes with superior reach obviously cost more. The closer the transport truck can get to the position, the cheaper the procedure will be. It is critical that the tree does not dry out after planting and therefore an irrigation system is advisable. Sometimes this may take the form of a grid-like drip system that delivers water over the

entire root area. Remember that a tree's roots are the same size as its canopy, just inverted. Aftercare is critical. Feeding has to be controlled and the newcomer will have to be watched for disease until it has fully acclimatised.

But what a wonderful miracle this process can be. I must have been witness to hundreds of trees planted this way over the years – from oaks, stinkwoods, oranges and lemons to *Ekebergia*, *Erythrina*, magnolias and frangipanis – and every single time I have been elated, awed by the power of these green giants and convinced that it's worth every cent. ■ *Franchesca Watson* ☎ 082 808 1287



Large-tree nurseries, such as Trees South Africa and Sun Gardens, specialise in salvaging, relocating and transplanting grown trees. ■ *Sun Gardens* ☎ 011 462 1872; *Trees South Africa* ☎ 021 842 0003