



Wire baskets: the pros and cons of planting them

Should we cut off the wire baskets from our B&B plant material when it comes time to install them? From my earliest experience I was led to believe that keeping the basket intact and in ground helped more than it hurt. Supposedly it continued to give the plant stability and



survivability until the root system established itself. The burlap and basket would simply decompose over time as the plant thrived towards maturity.

Sounds simple. It's not. There have been times when customers have brought in dead material after being planted for a season or so showing little to no root growth or that plant pushed a good root system only to die after girdling itself simply because the cage was left on and eventually inhibited the plants ability to extract moisture and nutrients.

Now I know in the age of RUN AND GUN LANDSCAPING, planting is more a production line with the little things being sometimes overlooked. I've done it myself, not realizing until later my mistake. When a plant is dug only 25 percent of its root system makes the trip. The cage and burlap are there for packaging and transportation from grower to landscaper. The plant stock is already at a disadvantage by time you and I get it only to be dealt the final death blow during the two-minute red zone planting drill.

Maybe there are no "pros" - the jury is out. If anything when planting maybe we cut away more of the cage, backfill with soil containing bio-tone or root stimulator while irrigating and tree staking the stock for stability. In the long run we will be better off taking these extra steps, what with the nursery stock shortage and what it costs to acquire and install a landscape project.



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