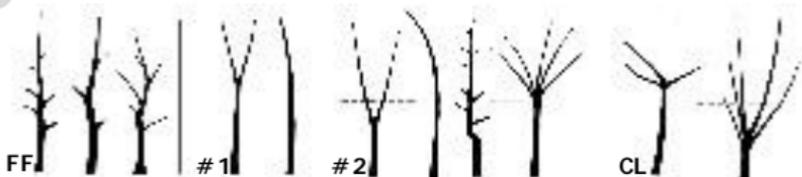


# Tree Grading Cue Card

provided by Roots Plus Growers<sup>®</sup>

## 1 Look inside the crown of the tree at the trunk form.



## 2 Check branch arrangement.



## 3 Choose appropriate tree matrix type.

- Type 1- spreading and rounded shapes.  
*ex. live oak, dogwood, black olive, gumbo limbo*
- Type 2- pyramidal shapes.  
*ex. river birch, bald cypress, cedar, pine*
- Type 3- columnar / upright shapes.  
*ex. 'East Palatka' holly, schefflera, Italian cypress*
- Type 4- vase shapes.  
*ex. crape-myrtle, buttonwood, ligustrum, redbud*
- Type 5- oval shapes.  
*ex. red maple, podocarpus, tabebuia, dahoon holly*

Refer to the matrix tables in the Grades and Standards when necessary to determine proper root ball size, container size, crown spread, and height.

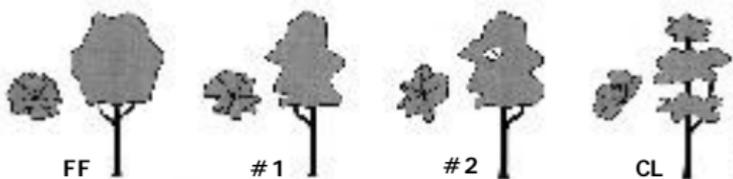
## 4 Measure the caliper of the trunk.

Trunk caliper is measured 6 inches from the ground on trees up to and including 4 inches in caliper, and 12 inches above the ground for larger trees. Diameter at 4½ feet (DBH) is not considered an appropriate measurement for nursery trees.

## 5 Grade the tree based on crown spread.

If the crown spread does not look proportional to the tree, use the matrix table you selected above along with the trunk caliper measurement to determine the crown spread for the tree. For this step select a grade based on crown spread only.

## 6 Grade the tree according to structural uniformity.



## 7 Make note of the lowest grade determined in steps 1, 2, 5, and 6.

**8** Reduce grade determined in step 7 by one grade if any **one** of the following is true.

- ✓ Tree with a trunk caliper >1" needs a stake to hold it upright.
- ✓ The root ball or container is undersized. (*consult tree matrix*)
- ✓ B&B root ball is not properly pinned, tied or wired.
- ✓ Tree is excessively root-bound.
- ✓ Evidence of large roots growing out of container. (*1/5 trunk diam*)
- ✓ Crown is thin and sparsely foliated. (*allow for harvesting/time of year*)
- ✓ More than 5% of branches have tip dieback.

**9** Reduce grade determined in step 8 by one grade if **two** of the following are true.

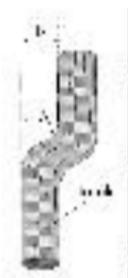
*If only one is true, do not reduce the grade. However, it takes only **one** true statement to reduce a Florida Fancy to a Florida #1. If more than two of the following are true reduce the grade by two.*

- ✓ Tree height is not in proper proportion. (*consult tree matrix*)
- ✓ Flush cuts were made when pruning branches from the trunk.
- ✓ Branch stubs are left beyond the branch collar.
- ✓ Open trunk wounds or other bark injury is evident.
- ✓ Graft unions are not complete.
- ✓ More than the lower 40% of the trunk is free of branches.
- ✓ More than 5% of canopy is chlorotic/pest & disease damaged.
- ✓ Most leaves are smaller than normal.
- ✓ Included bark between main trunks or trunk and major branch.
- ✓ Trunks and/or major branches are touching.

**10** Tree is a cull if it has a root greater than 1/10th the diameter of the trunk circling around more than 1/3rd of the trunk in the top half of the root ball.

## Important Grading Notes

- ☞ Remember that grading a tree should be a quick process. Once you are familiar with the process it should only take a few seconds to grade a single tree.
- ☞ When grading small maturing trees such as crape-myrtle, cattley guava, wax privet, yaupon holly, lignum-vitae, wax myrtle or other small-maturing trees skip steps 1, 2, and 4.
- ☞ Trunks do not have to be straight to be a Florida Fancy or Florida #1. See drawings for Florida Fancy and Florida #1 in step one.
- ☞ A trunk dogleg is defined as a significant 's'-shaped deformation in the trunk. This is illustrated in the figure to the right. *The angle 'A' can be no more than 30°. The distance 'B' can be no more than the trunk diameter.*



***This tree grading cue card was provided to you courtesy of the Roots Plus Field Growers Association of Florida***



*Growing Quality Field-Grown Trees*