Method Statement for Transplanting Mature Trees

Transplanting period

Citrus trees are to be transplanted between October and February.

All species of Ficus may be transplanted throughout the year however the summer months should be avoided. For other species, the period should be determined by consulting the Monitoring Unit.

All tree species should always be planted immediately after uprooting into pre-dug pits.

Transplanting

When possible the tree should be pruned in such a way that a certain amount of foliage is left on the main stems. Prepare the tree for removal by reducing the overall growth of the tree:

a) To remove any unnecessary, irregular or damaged growth and to form a balanced specimen.
b) To improve access for excavation and handling.
c) Mark the north side of the tree.

Using a back-hoe with a narrow bucket, cut out a trench, aiming to excavate the tree with a root ball. Excavation of soil around the tree should NOT be less than 1.5mtrs from the trunk.

Once the tree is lifted from the ground the roots should be trimmed as necessary.

Where large roots (in excess of 50mm dia.) are encountered, cut the root with a chainsaw and recommence excavation. Repeat until adequate depth is achieved and the trench extends the whole way around the tree.

Using the back-hoe, cut a slope through the trench on one side where there is a good access. The slope should extend from the ground level to the bottom of the root ball over a distance of between 3 & 5 times the depth of the root ball. (Determined by the size and development of the tree to be removed)

This is to facilitate access for the wheel loader or JCB front bucket down to a level where sheer force is then used to undercut the tree and remove it from the ground.
The main trunk should be protected at all times. Care must be taken in making the tree secure in preparation for the uplifting from the ground using special straps/belts for transplanting trees which should be protected by wrapping around the trunk a cloth/canvas material.

Make a sling that extends around the root ball and close to the base of the trunk to facilitate lifting of the tree. Using purpose-designed lifting straps, lift the tree onto a flat bed trailer and secure to the trailer. Transport the batch of trees to the designated planting site.

Care must be taken during transport from the excavation site to the planting site.

Excavated tree pits should have vertical sides. Pits should be 3 times the diameter and 300mm deeper that the root ball up to 25 litres in size. For 25 litre and larger, pits should be twice the diameter and the same depth as the root ball if planting material is good quality topsoil. There must be a minimum of 500mm good quality topsoil beneath the root ball.

The backfill in the tree pit should be made up of a mixture of compost, soil and adequate amount of an NPK fertiliser which should be high in phosphate.

According to the height and the growth of the tree, some may require secure staking to the ground either with the use of wooden stakes or using belt guying system.

An adequate ridge (konka) should be made around the transplanted tree for watering purpose.

The transplanted trees must be properly irrigated immediately and a follow up programme of watering should be set.

MELP should always be informed of any trees that are to be transplanted in order to carry out the necessary monitoring.