



Planting & Caring for your new Tree



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PLANTING BASICS

- Dig a hole only as deep as the height of the rootball. You want your tree to sit, as much as possible, on undisturbed soil. If you plant in deeper, soft soil you will need to plant your tree above grade to allow for settling. You want your graft/bud knob to remain above grade and uncovered. The goal is to plant at the same depth that the tree was originally grown.
- If your tree is well established in it's fabric "Root Pouch" pot, remove the pot completely.
- If your tree is recently potted in it's fabric "Root Pouch" pot, cut off the top 2/3rds of the pot once placed in it's planting hole.
- If your tree was in a Rootmaker knit field bag it **MUST** be removed completely. Best method is to lay the tree on it's side and, using a utility knife, cut down the side and across the bottom of the pot. Grab hold of the cut edge, and using the weight of the tree itself, life the tree up and pull off the pot as the tree rolls away from it.
- There won't be circling, tangled roots that need to be pruned or spread out when the tree has been grown in a root pruner. It will produce a dense, fibrous root system ready to take off when planted.
- If your tree has been grown in a plastic pot, then check for circling or extra long roots. These can be pruned off or untangled and spread out. Alternatively, you could cut 3 or 4 slits vertically through the outer inch of the root ball.
- If your soil is heavy (clay) you should chop up the soil outside of your planting hole to make it easier for the roots to expand out into the surrounding soil. If it's light (sandy) soil, you can skip this step.
- Fill in your planting hole with native soil and tamp it with a tamper, a shovel handle, or similar tool. Berm up the soil around your planting hole so it will hold water and let it soak into the root zone.
- There is generally an abundance of nutrients in the heavier soils, so you don't need to add any fertilizer. The lighter soils are generally more nutrient deficient and a tree will benefit from added fertilizer. We recommend top dressing with composted manure as the best fertilizer. Alternatively, you can top dress with slow release fertilizer or use a fertilizing tree spike. **NEVER** use lawn fertilizer on your landscape trees and plants! This is a quick way to kill them.
- Fruit-bearing trees could bear earlier and heavier with use of follar fertilizer or a top-dressing of composted manure over the root zone.
- Top off your planting hole with 3 inches of bark or other mulch. Pull the trunk clear of mulch to protect against damage from excess moisture retention, insects, and rodents.

WATERING YOUR NEW TREE

- Check moisture level by putting your finger into the root zone of your tree. If it feels damp at the finger depth, the tree does not need to be watered, but if it feels pretty dry at finger depth, it needs to be watered. As many people kill new trees by overwatering as by underwatering. The goal when watering is to keep the roots moist, but not too wet. Between waterings allow the ground to become slightly damp without being completely dry, so that air is available to the roots. Let the soil drain and dry slightly between waterings. Each time you water (or it rains) the soil should be wetted deeply (2 feet) rather than shallowly. This encourages the roots to grow down and to spread out. Never rely on a lawn sprinkler to water a tree. If your new tree is in full leaf, keep it extra wet for the first 2 weeks, and then gradually taper to less water and work into the “finger rule”.

STAKING YOUR NEW TREE

- A larger tree or a tree in a windy area will benefit from being staked. We typically use 2 metal “t-posts” or 2x2 wood posts. We use nylon strapping or bungee cords to secure the tree evenly to the posts.
- A smaller tree can be staked with a single bamboo pole tied with stretch tape or other non-damaging tie material.
- Any time you stake, be sure that the tree can still sway with the wind, and don’t leave the stake on any longer than necessary (3 months to 1 season). The tree will not grow a strong trunk if movement is over-restricted for a long period of time.

PROTECTING YOUR NEW TREE

- If the tree is susceptible to deer or rabbit damage, you should also be sure to protect it from those pests. In the absence of a trusty guard dog, you can put woven fencing around your posts. Males may rub antlers so you may need enough room to keep the things from reaching the tree with their heads. But, if the space inside the fencing is small enough that deer can’t jump inside, land, and jump back out, then the fencing doesn’t need to be more than 4 feet tall. Another option is to secure 4 pallets together to make more solid fence. You can use plastic tree wrap protectors or chicken wire to protect against rabbits.

PRUNING YOUR NEW TREE

- A broken branch can be pruned off just above a bud, or if necessary, flush with the trunk or other main branch. As a tree grows, you can raise the canopy by gradually taking off lower branches, cutting flush with the trunk. Do not paint with anything but allow to air cure.
- Fruit trees (and small ornamental trees) can be dwarfed by topping the central leader when it reaches the desired height. New research shows it is no longer advisable to prune a fruit tree until it’s bearing well. Do, however, remove any branches that cross over others, or any that grow straight up or down. If a critical branch you want to keep you can train these by tying them or shimming them into a more desirable angle.

