

Proper Tree Planting
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Giving your tree the right care from day one is essential for long life and health. This means taking the time and care to plant a tree properly.

When to Plant Trees

Climate plays a deciding role when determining the appropriate planting time. Newly planted trees do best when exposed to moderate temperatures and rainfall. They also need time to root and acclimatize before the onset of the intense heat and dryness of summer or the freezing temperatures of winter. Spring and fall, therefore, are generally the best planting seasons.

How to Plant Trees

While planting different types of trees differs in details, all trees eventually end up in a hole. But not any old hole will do. The most common mistake when planting a tree is a digging hole, which is both too deep and too narrow. If the hole is too deep, the roots don't have access to sufficient oxygen to ensure proper growth. If the hole is too narrow, the root structure can't expand sufficiently to nourish and properly anchor the tree.

As a general rule, trees should be transplanted no deeper than the soil in which they were originally grown. The width of the hole should be at least three times the diameter of the root ball or container or the spread of the roots in the case of bare root trees.

When digging in poorly drained clay soil, it is important to avoid "glazing". Glazing occurs when the sides and bottom of a hole become smoothed forming a barrier through which water has difficulty passing.

Planting Balled and Burlapped Trees

Balled and burlapped trees should always be lifted by the ball, never by the trunk. The burlap surrounding the ball of earth should be cut away or at least pulled back from the top one-third of the ball. Back fill soil is then placed in the hole surrounding the tree just to the height of the ball.

Planting Container Trees

In the case of metal or plastic containers, remove the container completely. Once removed from the container, check the roots. If they are tightly compressed/pot bound, use your fingers to carefully tease the fine roots away from the mass and then spread the roots prior to planting. Once the tree is seated in the hole, back fill into the hole to the soil level of the container.

Planting Bare-Rooted Trees

To plant, first build a cone of earth in the center of the hole, around which to splay the roots. Make sure that when properly seated on this cone, the tree is planted so that the trunk flare is clearly visible and the crown where the roots and trunk merge is about two inches above the soil level.

Watering in the new tree as you back fill the hole is most important to help squeeze out air pockets and help soil settle into the hole.