

Planting and Young Tree Care Guide

Planting Steps

- Before planting: soak the tree's roots in a container of water for one to two hours. This keeps the roots from drying out while you dig the hole. Avoid soaking roots for more than six hours.
- **Do not expose roots to freezing temperatures (or below) prior to planting.**
- Dig the hole deep and wide enough so the root system has plenty of room to grow. For our trees, a hole 2 ft. in diameter and 2 ft. deep is usually sufficient. Keep the more-nutritious topsoil in a separate pile so you can put it in the bottom of the hole.
- If you have heavy soil, you can loosen the soil by thoroughly mixing aged manure, garden compost, coir or peat moss (up to 1/3 concentration) into the topsoil.
- Place the tree in the center of the planting hole with its roots down and spread out. Keeping the trunk vertical, backfill the hole, putting the topsoil back in first. Work the soil carefully around the roots and tamp down firmly as you refill the planting hole around your tree in order to avoid creating air pockets.
- Especially if you're planting on a slope, create a rim of soil around the planting hole about two inches above ground level. This is called a "berm" and it works to catch water so that it can soak in rather than running off and causing soil erosion.

Caring For Your Young Tree

- **Protecting from rodents:** In the winters, one of the biggest threat to young trees is rodents chewing the bark and cambium layer of the tree. To prevent this, put a trunk protector around the base of your tree every fall. Make sure you remove it again in the spring to discourage insects that bore into the trunk.
- **Protecting from deer:** We strongly recommend putting up a fence to prevent deer from chewing on your baby tree, until its branches are out of reach.
- **Watering:** Trees should be watered after planting with two to five gallons per tree, added slowly. After this initial watering, if you are planting in the fall you should not need additional water until the tree starts to grow again in the spring. During the tree's initial growing years, when rainfall is less than 1 inch of rain per week, water at a rate of five gallons per tree per week. Be careful to avoid over-watering since the roots are very sensitive to flooding.
- **Pruning:** In the early years, you should not need to do much, if any, pruning.
 - Fruit trees can be pruned sparingly at planting to develop the shape of the tree. After this initial pruning, they should be pruned as little as possible until they reach full production, generally six to ten years after planting.
 - At planting, remove branches that are within 30 inches of the soil since they are too low and may impede lawn care. On the main trunk, select four strong branches to become the lower limbs and prune off the rest. Leave the central trunk un-pruned. Ideally, branches should be spaced evenly in a spiral around the trunk, but this doesn't always happen. Select branches that are oriented somewhat horizontally rather than growing upright since they bear fruit more quickly than upright branches. They should be smaller in diameter than the main trunk. Prune off any shoot tips that are dead.