

Tree Planting Guide

1 Clear the planting area

- Remove grass and weeds in a 4-foot wide area.

2 Prepare the tree

- Carefully remove the tree from its pot or bag to avoid damaging the root ball. Expose the true root flare (where the first main roots of the root ball attach to the trunk). You might have to remove extra soil on top to find the root flare.
- Thoroughly loosen the root ball with your hands and straighten out flexible, small roots.
- Prune any large, circling roots around the trunk or at or below the soil line.
- Remove any tags on the tree and the nursery stake.



Recommended tools:

- Shovel
- Hand pruner or root saw
- Water hose or bucket
- Tarp
- Gloves
- Stakes and ties
- Mulch

3 Dig a hole

- Dig a hole as deep as the height of the root ball, and 2-3 times the width, placing soil on a nearby tarp. The sides of the planting hole should be loose and roughened.

4 Place the tree

- Place the tree in the hole and ensure that the top of the root ball is level or 1 inch above ground level.
- Lay a shovel or stake across the hole to check for correct planting depth.

5 Backfill around the root ball

- Fill the hole with the same soil you originally removed.
- Tamp the soil as you backfill to eliminate air pockets.
- When backfilling is complete, the tree should be straight with the root flare visible above the soil line.

6 Build a watering berm

- Build the berm (a low ring of dirt around the tree) about 6 inches high, outside the root ball perimeter.

7 Water the tree

- Slowly water the tree (at the roots, not the trunk) with a hose or bucket. Give the tree 15-20 gallons of water.

8 Apply mulch

- Place a 3-inch layer of wood chip mulch around the tree to help control weeds and prevent evaporation.
- Push the mulch 5-6 inches away from the base of the tree, creating a “donut hole” around the trunk.

9 Stake the tree

- If needed, support the young tree with 2-4 stakes placed 18 inches from the trunk. Stakes should be equally spaced around the tree.
- Loosely loop ties around the tree to allow some trunk movement in the wind.
- Stakes will be removed after the first year of growth.



Yay, you've planted a tree!

To learn more about young tree care, visit treesaregood.org/treeowner