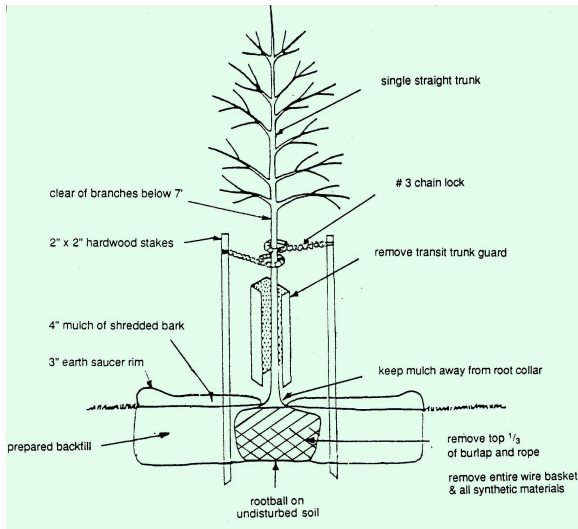


SHADE TREE COMMITTEE



THE ART OF PLANTING A TREE

The big day has come and you want to plant a tree for all your family to enjoy. Are you also hoping your tree will last for many years to come? Your tree is a long term investment and the way you plant it will determine how fast it will adapt to its new home and how well it will grow in the future. Successful planting of a tree can be simple if you consider these guidelines. These suggestions also apply to planting shrubs.

Looking for Your Tree

Shop around and compare. Find trees that appear healthy, vigorous and have good form. Choose medium height over taller or shorter specimens. Take a good look at the roots. Is the root ball of generous size? Is it tight? A loose root ball is a bad sign. If the tree is in a pot, are the roots coming out through the pot's holes? They shouldn't.

Getting Your Tree Home Safely

Insist that your tree is covered with a tarpaulin if the nursery delivers it. If you plan to take it home in your car yourself, plan ahead. Make sure the root ball is secured in the car so it does not roll. Wrap the tree in an old bedspread or a sheet (don't use plastic; your tree may cook under it). This prevents the tree from drying out when exposed to the force of the wind while you take it home. Make sure you wrap the trunk with an old towel for the trip.

Unloading

Do not lift the tree by the trunk or drop it to the ground suddenly. If you do that the weight of the soil will crush the roots. Lift the tree from the bottom of the ball only. A pot can be lifted from below or carried by the lip. If the tree is really heavy try propping a piece of plywood on the bumper of the car and slide the tree gently to the ground.

Storage

If you cannot plant the tree at once, store it in the shade. After unloading put it upright and water daily until planted. The root ball should be damp at all times and covered with mulch.

Digging the Planting Hole

Dig a hole with straight sides and flat bottom to the exact depth of the root ball. Have a yardstick handy; it will save a lot of lifting. Make the hole three times the size of the root ball in width.

Putting the Tree into the Hole

The most important part of planting a tree is setting it at the correct level. The finished grade for the new tree should be no higher than one inch above the root flare. The root flare is a point where the roots start coming out of the trunk. The top of the first major root growing from the trunk must be within one inch of the top of the root ball. In nursery cultivation the soil is often pushed aside into rows and may cover the roots deeper than the original level at which they had grown. The best way to check this is to scrape away the soil gently at the trunk to find the flare. When you are sure where it is, you can adjust the height of the root ball.

Soil Preparation

Take out large stones from the soil removed from the hole. Mix the soil with an equal portion of organic material.

Preparing the Tree for Planting

Make sure the tree is straight, in the center of the hole and at existing grade. Remove all natural burlap and ropes from the top one third of the root ball. A wire basket, and all synthetic materials, including synthetic burlap, should be removed entirely without disturbing the root ball.

Backfilling

Fill the prepared soil around the root ball, tamp lightly and settle by watering. Do not leave any air pockets around the root ball. Bring the backfill to the finished grade. You can measure this by putting a rake handle across the hole (here your yardstick comes in handy again). Water the soil well to see how it settles. If there is not enough soil, add more and water again. After the soil was thoroughly watered, form a saucer around the tree for holding additional water.

Pruning

It is best to limit pruning of the new tree to damaged twigs, or obvious defects. It is easy to do while the tree is still on the ground. As the tree takes hold it will respond well to additional pruning that might be necessary.

Staking

Set the tree straight. Drive two stakes into the undisturbed soil at the sides of the hole (not through the root ball). Position the stakes against the prevailing wind. The chain link ties are easier to work with and adjust than wire threaded through a piece of garden hose. The ties should be flexible enough for slight movement of the upper portion of the trunk. Secure them around the trunk and into each other in a figure 8 to prevent slipping. The stakes should be removed after two years.

Mulching

Neatly edge your finished hole and mulch it with a four inch layer of natural double shredded hardwood bark. The mulch should not touch the trunk. Leave four inches around the trunk free of mulch.

Watering

Your newly planted tree will need plenty of water to get established. Water at least once a week in dry weather, giving it a really good soak. For the first two seasons make sure the water penetrates the original root ball that may dry out sooner than your soil.