

PLANTING A NEW TREE

STEPS IN TREE PLANTING:

- 1 – Identify the trunk flare.
- 2 – Dig a shallow, broad planting hole.
- 3 – Remove the containers or cut away the wire basket.
- 4 – Place the tree at the proper height.
- 5 – Straighten the tree in the hole.
- 6 – Fill the hole gently, but firmly.
- 7 – Mulch the base of the tree.
- 8 – Provide follow-up care.*

* Follow-up care may include minor pruning of branches damaged during the planting process. Prune sparingly after planting and delay necessary corrective pruning until a full season of growth in the new location has occurred.

PLANTING CHECK LIST:

- ☐ Locate a good planting spot
- ☐ Follow the steps to plant the tree
- ☐ Use stakes to support the tree if needed
- ☐ Water regularly during the first growing season
- ☐ Return the container to the for Forestry Office if possible

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Developed by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), a non-profit organization supporting tree care research around the world and dedicated to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees. For further information, contact: ISA, P.O. Box 3129, Champaign, IL 61826-3129, USA.

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When Should I Plant?

The best time to plant a tree is when the tree is dormant in the Fall or early Spring before bud break. A Tree can be planted throughout the growing season if given the proper care.

Where Should I Plant?

Consider how the tree may look when full size: will branches be too close to my house? Is the tree under any power-lines or cables? When the trunk grows will it damage any concrete or structures? Try to avoid planting large trees within 5 feet of the house, road, or powerlines, and remember that tree pruning is a good idea no matter where the tree is planted.

Trees combat climate change

Excess carbon dioxide (CO₂) caused by many factors is a building up in our atmosphere and contributing to climate change. Trees absorb CO₂, removing and storing the carbon while releasing the oxygen back into the air. In one year, an acre of mature trees absorbs the amount of CO₂ produced when you drive your car 26,000 miles.

Trees clean the air

Trees absorb odors and pollutant gases (nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone) and filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and bark.

PLANTING STEPS:

1. **ID Trunk Flare** — The trunk flare is where the trunk expands at the base of the tree. This point should be partially visible after the tree has been planted (see diagram below). Remove excess soil from the top of the root ball prior to planting if the root flare is not visible.
2. **Dig a Shallow, Broad Planting Hole** — Holes should be 2 to 3 times wider than the root ball, by only as deep as the root ball. Digging a broad planting pit breaks up the surrounding soil and provides newly emerging tree roots room to expand.
3. **Remove the Containers or Cut Away the Wire Basket** — Inspect container tree root balls for circling roots. Straighten, cut, or remove them. Expose the trunk flare, if necessary.
4. **Place the Tree at the Proper Height** — Take care to dig the hole to the proper depth - and no more. The majority of tree's roots develop in the top 12 inches (30 cm) of soil. If the tree is planted too deep, new roots will have difficulty developing because of a lack of oxygen. In poorly drained or heavily clayed soils, trees can be planted with the base of the trunk flare 2 to 3 inches (5 to 7.5 cm) above grade. When placing the tree in the hole, lift it by the root ball, not the trunk.
5. **Straighten the Tree in the Hole** — Before backfilling, have someone view the tree from several directions to confirm it is straight. Once planted, it is difficult to reposition a tree.

PLANTING STEPS CONTINUED:

6. **Fill the Hole Gently, but Firmly** — Pack soil around the base of the root ball to stabilize it. If the root ball is wrapped, carefully cut and remove any fabric, plastic, string, and/or wire from around the trunk and root ball to prevent girdling and to facilitate root growth. Fill the remainder of the hole, firmly packing the soil to eliminate air pockets that may dry out roots. Further reduce air pockets by watering periodically while backfilling.
7. **Mulch the Base of the Tree** — Mulch around the base of a tree to hold moisture, moderate soil temperature extremes, and reduce grass and weed competition. A 2-to-4 inch layer is ideal. More than 4 inches may cause a problem with oxygen and moisture levels. Piling mulch right up against the trunk of a tree may cause decay of the living bark. A mulch-free area, 1 to 2 inches wide at the base of the tree, reduces moist bark conditions and prevents decay.
8. **Provide Follow-up Care** — Keep the soil moist, but not water-logged. Water trees at least once a week, barring rain, and more frequently during hot, windy weather. When the soil is dry below the surface of the mulch, it is time to water. Continue until mid-fall, tapering off as lower temperatures require less-frequent watering.

