



## Tree and Shrub Planting Guide

One of the most common causes for failure of new trees and shrubs to thrive is improper planting. Proper planting of trees and shrubs allows the root structure to re-establish itself more quickly, leading to healthier, faster growing plants. The following guidelines will help ensure successful transplant of your newly purchased tree or shrub.

**Digging the Hole:** Dig a hole the same depth and two to three times the width of the diameter of the root ball. A hole which is too narrow and deep is a common mistake when planting. Your tree or shrub needs to be set on a firm base, with a sufficient amount of loosened soil around it for roots to grow into. Loosening the soil around the sides of the hole with your spade, especially in soils with high clay content, will allow water to more easily penetrate into the root zone.

**Container Plants:** Carefully remove plant from the pot by striking the sides and bottom until loosened. Use your hands to loosen compacted roots. If a plant is "potbound" or has spiraling roots, it may be necessary to either cut the circling roots or use your shovel to loosen up the root ball. Set your tree or shrub in the hole so that the soil level of the root ball is even or slightly above (1/2 to 1 inch) ground level. Backfill soil into the hole lightly compressing as you fill to eliminate air pockets. Be careful not to compact soil too much which will inhibit water from reaching the roots.

**Balled and Burlapped (B&B) Plants:** Cut into string or twine holding the burlap. It is not necessary to remove the burlap itself or any wire cages surrounding the ball, however the burlap at the top of the root ball should be cut away from the base of the plant. The top of the root ball should be even or slightly higher (1/2 to 1 inch) with the ground level. Backfill soil into the hole lightly compressing as you eliminate air pockets. Be careful not to compact soil too much which will inhibit water from reaching the roots.

**Mulch:** Place a 3-4 inch deep layer around the tree or shrub to conserve soil moisture. The mulch should be wider than the root ball, ideally extending out past the canopy of your tree or maximum diameter of shrubs. The further out you can lay the mulch the better. Do not mound or place against the trunk or base of your plant. Your mulch layer should be flat and pulled back several inches away from the plant base.

**Watering:** Water thoroughly after planting. The root ball of a newly planted tree or shrub dries out quickly and should be checked every couple of days. A general rule of thumb is that newly planted trees and shrubs require 2 inches of water per week. It is always best to water slowly and deeply once or twice a week. Watering lightly more often will encourage the roots to grow too shallowly resulting in a weaker, less healthy plant. Once established, an inch of water per week is sufficient. Adjust watering according to weather conditions and remember that overwatering is just as harmful as underwatering.

**Transplant Shock:** Some plants may suffer from the condition of transplant shock resulting from a loss of roots. Yellowing, dropping and undersized leaves as well as some twig die back and slow growth are symptoms to watch for. These symptoms should disappear as the plant adjusts to its new surroundings, which can take up to 2 years. Adequate care will not eliminate transplant shock but will help to decrease symptoms and aid in the plants' recovery.