

10 Tips for Successful Tree Planting



Selecting a healthy tree that's appropriate for your environment is the first step in ensuring that your tree thrives. Equally important is planting your new tree properly. Here are some tips for successful tree planting.

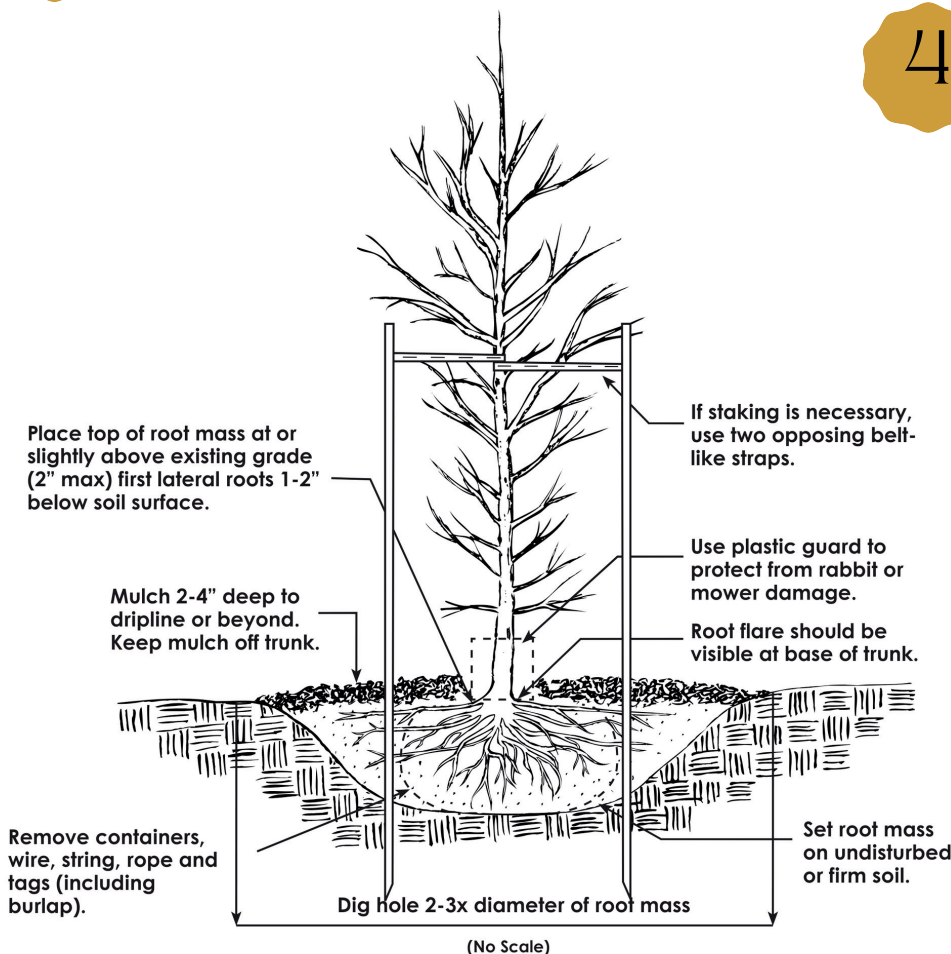
1 Dig a saucer-shaped hole wider than your tree's root system but no deeper than the root mass. Most holes do not need to be deeper than 10-14 inches. The bottom of the hole should be firm enough to prevent the tree from settling further.

2 Remove the pot or container before planting, as well as any wire, twine or tags on the tree. If the roots are encased in a wire basket or burlap, remove these before positioning your tree in the hole. Locate the first main roots (called the lateral roots) and remove all excess soil above them.

3 Position your tree in the hole so the base of the trunk is at original ground height or slightly higher. The first lateral roots should be just under the soil surface (1-2 inches deep), and the trunk should flare visibly at ground level.

4 Loosen and spread out any roots that are circled around. It may be necessary to cut larger roots that cannot be straightened to prevent what's called girdling, which is when the roots become bound together, but this should be done with caution.

5 Once your tree is properly positioned at the correct depth, backfill with the original soil dug from the hole. Break up large clods and chunks as much as possible. Adding water during backfilling can help remove air pockets and better moisten the roots.



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Mulch with a 2-4 inch layer of wood mulch from the trunk to the drip line (the outer edges of the canopy). Don't pile mulch up against the trunk, and don't spread it too deeply over the roots. Also do not mulch with rock or use a plastic weed barrier beneath the mulch.

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Brace or stake the tree to protect it from the wind. Use only broad, belt-like materials to attach the bracing to the trunk (do not use wire, rope or wire encased in rubber). Some sway should be allowed in the tree after staking. Remove the staking within one year of planting.

Post-planting Care

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After planting, keep the root zone moist but not waterlogged. In general, a newly planted tree should receive about 1 inch of moisture per week, including rainwater, during the first growing season. Check the root zone frequently for moistness—don't just guess. Many new trees are lost to either underwatering or overwatering.

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Most trees do not need to be fertilized. Never add fertilizer to the planting hole, as it can damage newly transplanted roots. Address poor soil problems before planting by adding organic matter.



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Do not prune your tree at planting time except to remove dead or damaged branches or to correct structural defects. Never cut back healthy branches or trim the newly planted tree. The tree will benefit from having as many food-producing leaves left on as possible. In addition, leave the lower branches on for as long as possible after planting, as they help to protect the trunk from cracking, sunscald and animal damage.

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