



Proper Tree Planting Techniques

Choose the Right Tree

Determine where the tree will be planted. Is there enough light and space for the tree to reach its full size at maturity? Is the tree adapted to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone where it will be planted? Will the soil structure and pH support the particular species to be planted? Performing a soil test before choosing a tree is always a good idea. When selecting the plant, look for good branching structure and a straight, defect-free trunk. Avoid saplings with broken branches or a poor root system.

Prepare the Site for Planting

Make sure that no underground utilities exist in the location where the tree will be placed. Dig a broad, shallow hole – it should be 2 to 3 times the width of the root ball, and only as deep as the ball. Scrape the sides of the hole with a shovel or other tool to create a rough surface so roots can grow into the surrounding soil easily.

Plant the Tree

Locate the root flare at the tree's base. The flare is where the trunk spreads out at the soil line. If the flare is not visible, remove any excess soil until it is. If the tree is in a container, remove the container and cut through any encircling roots.

Place the tree in the hole. If the tree is balled and burlaped, cut off as much of the wire cage as possible, pull the burlap off of the top of the root ball and cut it away from the sides. Place the tree so that the base of the root flare will be at the final soil line. Before backfilling the hole, make sure the tree is straight by checking it from several angles.

Fill the hole with the soil that was dug. Periodically stamp down the soil to eliminate air pockets that can dry out roots. Do not add any soil amendments to the backfill. Once the hole is filled in to the proper level, apply a 2-3 inch layer of mulch around the base. Be sure to keep the mulch 4-6 inches away from the base of the trunk.

Do not stake the tree unless it cannot stand on its own, or the area is subject to frequent, high winds.

After Care

Water the tree so that the soil stays moist, but not saturated. Typically, the tree should receive about 25 gallons of water, or 1.5 inches of rainfall, per week. Adjust your watering accordingly based on weather conditions.

Additional Resources

Trees Are Good www.treesaregood.org/treecare/resources/New_TreePlanting.pdf

Tree Care Tips www.treecaretips.org/Planting/Planting.htm

Arbor Day Foundation www.arborday.org/media/zones.cfm