



Planting Instructions

There are lots of schools of thought on the “Correct” way to plant. There are just as many variables in the places plants get installed.

- a) **The Hole** Dig a hole larger than the root ball you want to install. 6 to 12 inches larger around but not any deeper. Some plants in heavy wet clay will benefit from being planted a little shallow (yews, spruce, pine). Disturbing the bottom of the hole might promote settling too deep. The top of the root ball should NOT be lower than the surrounding grade.
- b) **The Root Ball** Container grown plants with lots of tightly knit roots will benefit from disturbing the root ball by roughing up the roots with your hands a little or cutting 3 or 4 vertical slashes with a utility knife. Just something to change the roots tendency to grow in a circle.

Recently potted plants should be handled gently and try not to disturb the roots. Maintain the root ball integrity by letting the soil dry a few days before planting. The ball will slide out a little easier and hold together better if dryer not wetter.

Balled and Burlaped (b & b) plants should be handled very carefully so as to not disturb the integrity of the ball of soil and roots. This is why we recommend leaving the wire basket in place during the installation. Caution: Some tree balls have nails to hold the burlap together! Painful! You only get one chance to get it in the hole with the “good side” facing the way you want it, so take your time and plan ahead. Here is where an extra strong back may come in handy! Do not horse the tree around by the trunk and DO NOT DROP IT.

Remove the rope, twine, strapping or burlap that circles the trunk AFTER you are more than 50% backfilled. Cut a few wires if you want to.

- c) **Backfill** In many cases, when you dig the hole for your plant, the soil at the surface will be pretty good and the soil at bottom of the hole will be poor. DO NOT discard all the poor soil. A mixture of the good and poor soil will allow the plant an opportunity to develop a root system that will ultimately grow into the poor subsoil. This has to happen and the plant will grow fine.

Backfill with the amended soil, being careful not to pack the soil tight. Let the watering settle the soil around the root ball. Remember to cut the rope around the trunk after you back fill. The top of the root ball should not be lower than the surrounding grade.



- d) **Staking** Larger plants or plants on windy sites will definitely benefit from proper staking. Constant movement breaks off the new roots as fast as they form. Use two stakes driven into the ground outside the area of disturbed soil. The stakes and tree should form a straight line; stake, tree, stake. Metal fence posts make great stakes, (sturdy and cheap). Two lengths of wide nylon strapping work best (think backpack straps) or rope works well as long as you protect the plants bark from scrapes or cutting. Old garden hose will protect the plants bark as long as it stays in place.
- Use the rope or straps to tug the tree straight. Snug is better than tight, a little motion is OK. We have examples of this at Winterland for your viewing pleasure.
- e) **Watering** How much water is the 64,000 dollar question. Every day is way too much, once a month is not enough. The in between is a large grey where the answers lie.
- What are you planting? Dogwood and ash are a little more forgiving than rhododendron or Crimson King maple. Most plants transplant easily and adapt quickly. We will let you know if your selection is a "touchy" variety.
- Sun or shade? Less light usually means slower growth and thus less water. Hot and windy? Some new plants can't drink fast enough until their roots develop further so an occasional misting of the top is in order to slow transpiration on hot windy days.
- Soil type? This is very important! Water moves through clay at a very slow rate and through sand at a very fast rate. Over watering is much easier in clay soils than in sandy soils so we have to keep two things in mind.
- #1 Amend the soil! Mix the dark soil at the surface with the clay or sand or rock or whatever is further down. Add some compost or top soil or bagged soil if there is not much top soil. You have to create a transition zone for the roots. They will ultimately have to grow into that clay or sand or rock to sustain your new plant. A 50/50 clay or sand or rock and amendment mix will promote strong root development.
- #2 Get your fingers dirty! The easy way to tell how wet the soil is? Touch it! Stick your fingers in the loose soil around your new plant at least two knuckles deep. If they come out muddy or slippery, hold off on the water for a few days. Dry fingers suggest the need for a drink.
- Please remember that these plants are not aquatic. If some water is good more is not necessarily better. Our experience is that many more people drown plants than ever let them dry out.
- f) **Call us** If you encounter a unique situation or are unsure about how your plant is doing, call us so we can help you figure out the best way to make your new plants thrive.