

## **Tree Planting Tips**

This information is adapted from the [International Society of Arboriculture](#).

1. The ideal time to plant trees is during the dormant season (fall or early spring). If summer planting is unavoidable, ensure trees receive extra irrigation and care.
2. Exercise care in storage and transport of nursery stock, to avoid stress or mechanical damage. Lift the tree by the root ball, not by the trunk. Do not allow roots to dry out.
3. Before digging, locate all underground utility wires – call (800) 474-6886.
4. Dig a shallow, broad planting hole with the hole widest at the top and sloping sides; at least 450-600mm (18-24 in) wider than the root ball diameter (or 3-5 times wider than root ball diameter in compacted soils). Dig only to the same depth as the root ball. Identify the trunk flare (point where the roots spread at the base of the tree) to determine the proper depth of the hole. Do not place gravel in the bottom of the hole. [See diagram](#).
5. Install root barriers (at least 450mm, or 18 in. deep) where there is an adjacent sidewalks or hardscape feature, according to manufacturer directions.
6. Place the tree in the hole, at the proper height. Do not plant the tree lower than the trunk flare; it is better to plant a few inches higher than the trunk flare to allow for some settling.
7. Straighten the tree and gently backfill the hole. If the tree is burlapped, cut and remove the string and wire from around the trunk and top 1/3 of the root ball as you fill the hole.
8. When backfilling use the same soil that came out of the hole; if a different type of soil is used to fill the hole, this may result in problems with drainage around the root ball. If the native soil is extremely poor, topsoil or soil amendments may be necessary but mix at least 50% of the native soil in with

any additional amendments; topsoil should match the same texture as the native soil and the hole should be much wider to allow for growth.

9. Firm the soil but do not pack. Water thoroughly. Remaining soil may be mounded into a berm to collect water in the root zone (leave a gap in the berm if the soil is clay). Fertilizer application at the time of planting is not recommended.
10. Staking may be needed as a barrier to trunk damage and vandalism or where windy conditions are present. Stake the tree only if necessary, as staked trees tend to develop weaker trunks and smaller root systems. If staking for support, use two stakes in conjunction with a wide flexible tie material. Remove support staking after the first year of growth to avoid girdling the stem.
11. Mulch the base of the tree with 50-100mm (2-4 in) of organic matter (e.g. straw, bark, peat moss, wood chips, leaf litter) to hold in moisture and protect against extreme soil temperatures. Keep mulch at least 25-50mm (1-2 in) away from the trunk to prevent decay. Do not apply too much mulch.
12. Water the tree for the first three years of establishment, about once a week during the growing season (more often during hot weather). Keep the soil moist but not soaked.
13. Prune sparingly after planting; corrective pruning should not be done until the tree has experienced a full year of new growth.
14. Tree spacing will vary depending upon the geometry of the site and landscaping objectives. Refer to the guidelines according to the size of the tree. Consider the volume of soil available to each tree. If the soil volume is too low (e.g. narrow planting strips with closely spaced trees) then trees will be competing with each other for available water and nutrients. Keep in mind the mature size of the tree so that tree canopies will not become too closely packed as they grow.

## **References**

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