

Planting Trees



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Once you have chosen your tree or trees, the next step is planting. Trees will be a focal point in your garden for decades to come, so it is worth paying a little extra attention to make sure they make it through that first period of adaptation. Once well established, your trees should be able to take care of themselves.

Follow these important steps when planting:

- The best time for planting bare root trees is early spring (before the leaf buds open) or late fall (after deciduous leaves have fallen). Potted trees have a wider window of opportunity for planting but try to avoid periods of extreme heat and drought and ensure that fall plantings allow enough time for adjustment before frosts start.
- Choose early mornings, evenings, and rainy days to do the work. Avoid planting seedlings under the hot sun.
- Keep the roots moist at all times, but don't immerse them in water. If you must store them, do so in a sheltered, cool, shaded spot. Bare root trees and seedlings should be planted as soon as possible.
- In the case of seedlings, remove a patch of sod about 3 to 6 cm wide and dig a hole 3 to 10 cm deep for each one—just deep enough to allow the root of the plant to be

buried up to the root collar (where the roots join the stem). There should be enough space to spread the roots out without bending or curving them around.

- In the case of larger bare root trees, you can build a cone-shaped mound in the centre of the hole that will allow you to spread the tree's roots out over the mound.
- For large plants, the hole should be the same depth as and two to three times the width of the root ball. Allow at least 15 cm of extra space around a root.
- Leave a radius of at least 1 metre between plantings. Consult with an expert on the spacing required between each species of tree or shrub.
- Use the soil removed from the hole to fill it back in. Break up any hard-packed clumps.
- Add the soil gradually. Gently tamp the soil or add water to eliminate any air pockets. Be sure not to compact the soil. Add more soil and water again. This step ensures that air pockets are filled with healthy soil. Do not press very wet soil or it will become too compacted.
- Water the tree immediately if possible. Add the water slowly, letting it soak in before adding more.
- Stake trees only if absolutely necessary, i.e., if the site is very windy. Be sure to use soft, wide material strips and tie loosely to allow some movement. Gradually loosen the guy wires so the tree can develop its own strength.
- Ensure that your tree has adequate water for the first few years. Start with frequent watering and gradually lengthen the time between watering. Watering requirements will vary depending on the size of the tree, soil type, time of planting, and amount of rainfall. Generally, the smaller the tree at planting the more quickly it will adapt. Ask your supplier for advice relevant to your area and the particular tree.
- Prune only to remove dead or broken branches.
- A layer of wood chips or other [mulch](#) material around the tree or shrub will keep the tree's roots cool and moist, prevent soil erosion and weed growth, and protect the trunk from lawn mowers and trimmers. The tree should be mulched as far out as its drip line but be sure to keep the mulch 15 cm back from the tree trunk to discourage access by mice. To break up large areas of mulch, add forest understory plants such as Solomon's seal, ferns, wild ginger, or foamflower.
- Continue weed control until the tree is big enough to compete with weeds. Keep watch for this problem for at least two years.
- Protect your trees and shrubs from any grazing animals or human damage by surrounding them with fencing.
- Mesh "socks" or covers can be placed over the leading shoots of young conifers to protect them from grazers.
- Protect the trunks of your deciduous trees from rodents over winter by encircling them with tree wrap or chicken wire. You can also use a length of plastic corrugated and perforated drain pipe (available at hardware stores); however, ensure that the width you choose is wide enough to leave space between the tree and the pipe.

If you take care of your new trees until they are able to take care of themselves, they will return the favour by providing you with shade and cool air on hot summer days and shelter from wind on those chilly winter days.