

Planting Trees and Shrubs

Gray Barn Green Thumb Guide



You've just bought a beautiful tree or shrub and now what? Here are some tips on how to plant it in the ground and get it off to a good start.

1. **Select the right spot.** If you put the right plant in the right place, half the battle is over. Consider hours of sunlight, soil conditions and moisture levels and match these to the needs of your plant.
2. **Dig the hole.** Dig as deep as your plants rootball, but twice as wide. This will make it easier for roots to grow and develop. Good drainage is essential to healthy plants. Most plants resent sitting in a puddle, so check your site and consider creating a raised bed or mound if drainage is poor.
3. **Add soil amendments and fertilizer.** The addition of compost will improve the quality of any soil, especially the heavy clay soil often found in the Northwest. Compost helps retain nutrients and increase drainage, making plants healthier. Mix one part compost with two parts native soil. Mix in an organic fertilizer or alfalfa meal at this time, following package directions for size of plant.
4. **Planting**
 - A. **Container Plants.** Lay container on its side and gently slide the plant out. If the plant is root bound, or has a thick layer of roots, loosen them by slicing with a knife and/or pulling them gently apart. This will encourage their growth into the surrounding soil.
 - B. **Balled and Burlapped (B&B).** Keep the burlap around the rootball and place in the hole. Cut off any rope or twine and peel back burlap from the top of plant, leaving it on the sides and bottom. Removal of the burlap and breaking of the rootball could cause serious root damage and be detrimental to plant growth, so leave the burlap intact. The roots will grow through the burlap and it will disintegrate with time.
 - C. **Bareroot.** Keep the roots of the bareroot plant covered or moist until planting time. Prune off any damaged roots. Form a small mound of soil and gently spread the roots over it.

For all of the above, position the plant in the best direction, rotating as needed. Plant at the proper level--the crown should be one inch above the soil level. The plant crown is where the stem meets the roots. The graft union on fruit trees and roses should be above the soil level as well. Position the plant so it's straight and fill the planting hole with the amended soil and fertilizer.

5. **Water well.** Water the root ball as well as the surrounding soil. Water deeply so that water reaches to the full depth of the root ball. Consistent water is vital during the first two years after planting until roots are fully developed. One inch once a week is a good standard for most trees and shrubs.
6. **Staking.** Stake young trees that may be damaged by weather and winds after planting. Drive two strong stakes into the ground 1-2 feet out from the trunk and perpendicular to the prevailing wind. Stakes should be tall enough to be tied at $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the tree height, up to 5 feet tall. Tie stakes to the tree with a non-chafing material. The trees should be able to move freely in most winds, but not fall over in a storm. Remove the stakes and ties after one full growing season.
7. **Mulch.** Add 2 to 4 inches of mulch around the base of the plant to retain moisture and discourage weeds. To prevent crown rot, avoid direct contact between mulch and the tree trunk.
8. **Prune.** Prune only to remove dead or broken branches.
9. **Smile** You did it!