

## Container Planting

The guidelines for planting container plants is similar for container trees, shrubs, bushes, grasses, etc..

### Plant placement

It is very important that the placement of your container plants be well thought. Proper drainage, sunlight or shade are important for the successful growth of your plant material.

### Tree placement

Please see our “**Proper Tree Selection**” guide.

### Proper moving & handling

Caution should be exercised whenever handling larger container plants and trees. They can be heavy and awkward. Eye protection should always be worn as smaller branches can easily poke when planting.

When transporting a plant with leaves on it, wrap the leafed branches with burlap or a mesh tarp to protect them from the drying effects of the wind and the physical damage wind can do.

### Digging the hole

Dig a hole 30% to 50% wider than the plants root ball. The hole should be only as deep as the plants root ball.

- hole depth - do not excavate any deeper than the root ball itself. Plants need a solid footing to sit on. Loose soil under the root ball will settle, placing the root ball below grade. And tilting might also occur. Planting too deeply is a common problem that results in stagnated growth.
- hole width - as a general rule, planting holes should be twice as wide as the root ball, if feasible. When planting in poorly drained soil or if the surrounding ground isn't sloped, plant with the root ball elevated approximately one-third of its height above the existing soil. Use the back fill to slope-up around the elevated root ball.

### Placing the plant in the hole

- Remove the container.
- Run a knife along the root ball to keep the roots from growing in a circle and girdling the plant.
- Check to ensure the root ball is at least slightly above grade, more in poorly drained soil.
- If the plant is grafted, set the knot (bud union) so that it is flush with the ground or to the level the plant was accustomed to growing as indicated by the color of the bark.
- **Do** remove any twine from the stem or trunk to prevent girdling.

### Backfill

- Research indicates that backfilling the planting hole with native soil will allow the plant to establish itself better. Improving backfill soil by using peat moss, topsoil, or other such soils is not recommended. (Improved soil may cause roots to stay in the planting hole instead of spreading as they normally would.)
- Make sure the plant is straight as backfill is added. Work carefully to avoid air pockets, making sure to firm the soil from time to time so as to remove any air pockets and ensure the plant stays straight.
- Do not bury the graft or bud union below grade.

### Staking

- Due to our normally windy conditions it is recommended all trees and larger plants be staked for the first growing season. This allows the roots to establish so that the plant will stay straight.
- Do allow some slight movement. A plant that can sway somewhat in the wind will develop a stronger trunk.
- Do protect the plant's bark from the ties / wires. Short sections of old garden hose works well.
- Smaller plants can be staked with either the one stake or two stake methods. When using the one stake method it is recommended if planting in the fall or winter, the point of the stake should be South of the tree. If planting in the spring or summer, the

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point of the stake should be North of the tree.  
( see picture 1 )



Picture 1



Picture 2

- It is recommended that medium size plants should be staked with the two stake method. ( see picture 2 )
- All staking should be removed within one year after planting. Growth can actually be reduced if the supports are left in place for longer then a year. Trees can become girdled by the attaching wires as the trunk increases in diameter.

### 2 stake method

2 parallel stakes driven at least 18 inches into firm soil (approximately a foot beyond the planting hole) on opposite sides of the plant. Stake height after being driven into the ground should be approximately half to two-thirds that of the plant. Support the plant by 2 12-gauge wires attached to both stakes and looped loosely around the trunk. A piece of rubber hose should be used to protect the trunk.

### Tree / trunk wrap

- The bark on young tree's and some plants should be protected with trunk wrap, or a plastic spiral wrap, during its first year of growth.

- These wraps should be placed around the trunk of the plant or tree, between the first set of branches and the ground. ( see pictures 3 & 4 )



Picture 3



Picture 4

### Mulch

- Apply 3 to 4 inches of organic mulch around the base of the plant to conserve moisture and reduce weeds.
- Keep mulch 3 to 6 inches away from the trunk.

### Water

- Create a watering basin at least 4 to 6 inches high just outside the root-ball. Fill it with water, let it drain, and repeat.

### Pruning

- It is recommended on newly transplanted plants to prune only crossing branches or damaged limbs.

### After planting

- Watering - transplanted plants need regular watering until their roots grow into surrounding soil. During hot weather they may need to be watered every two to three days to keep the root-ball moist.
- Wetting the soil area outside the planting hole occasionally will ensure that roots develop into the surrounding soil.
- Do not use any commercial fertilizer the first growing season.

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- Do not damage or prune the leader of the plant until it is well established.

### Typical spring / summer planting watering schedule

- 1st week: water the day after planting and the following day
- 2nd week: one watering
- 3rd week thru summer: once every two weeks
- Fall thru winter: once per month

### Typical fall planting watering schedule

- 1st week: water the day after planting
- 2nd thru 4th week: one watering
- Fall thru winter: once per month

### Important notes

- 20 minutes of a slow flowing hose constitutes a watering
- 1 inch of rain water constitutes a watering (equals one watering)
- Water less with adequate rainfall and / or cool weather. Mulching reduces the need for water after the first 4 week period. If the soil is a "heavy" type, it will require less frequent watering than if it is a soil type that drains well (well drained soils dry out quicker).
- After the first four weeks after planting, the only sure way to determine water needs is to physically check the soil moisture at a depth of 3 to 4 inches and proceed accordingly.
- If there is a lack of moisture during the winter it is necessary to water once per month (but only when the ground is not frozen).

