

Planting and Care of Trees and Shrubs

Proper planting and care of nursery stock seems to be a mystery for many homeowners, especially with all the conflicting advice around. The real truth is that ordinary good, well-drained top soil will grow any plant just fine. The problems start when the naturally occurring topsoil is stripped away or a compacted subsoil and topsoil layer are left behind after construction of the home. Topsoil over a very compacted subsoil does little good as the poor drainage problem remains.

Planting of trees and shrubs

- If you have ordinary good soil that has not been compacted, dig a hole 2 to 3 times the diameter of the root ball and 1 to 1 1/2 times as deep.
- Place plant in hole by backfilling the hole until the plant is at a level where grown in the nursery. If the soil is heavy clay, raise the planting level to account for slower drainage and mound up the soil around the plant. ([See diagram](#)) On trees, be sure to keep the root flare above ground level. You may have to carefully pull some loose soil off the top of the root ball to "discover" the root flare of the tree.
- Before backfilling hole, roll back burlap and/or wire basket on balled and burlapped plants **after** the plant is in the hole. EXCEPTION: Poly-beige or plastic burlap must be removed entirely without breaking the soil ball.
- Remove so-called "plantable" containers carefully without breaking the root ball. Container-grown plants must have their outer root system broken and spread out or they will never become established. Simply cutting the roots with a knife in 3 or 4 places is not good enough. Exposing about 1" of root system by vigorous shaking will work.
- Soil additives: It has been proven by experiment that large additions of peat moss, bagged topsoil, and the like, hinder root spread. Always backfill the material taken out the hole, mixing in no more than 10% Canadian peat in the backfill is satisfactory. EXCEPTION: Rhododendrons, azaleas, and their relatives as well as dogwoods and magnolias, must have more peat and are extremely fussy about drainage.
- Foundation plantings are best if the soil is raised above the yard. First, work up the soil and add good topsoil to form the landscape bed. It will look good and the plants will love it.
- After all other preparations, gradually backfill the hole while tamping soil around roots with your foot. Do not break soil ball. On trees or very large shrubs, fill hole 3/4 full and then water thoroughly. After water goes down, fill hole to the top and mulch with about 2" of bark mulch. Smaller shrubs may be watered thoroughly after they are mulched with about 2" of bark. Be sure to keep the bark away from the plant's base, especially on evergreen

azaleas.

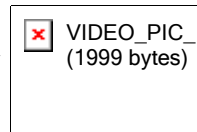
Planting with dry Canadian Peat Moss

When planting with dry Canadian Peat Moss, follow these guidelines:

Size of plant(s)	One bale equals:
1 gallon	20 plants
2 gallon	15 plants
3 gallon +	8 plants
1¼ - 1¾" caliper (b&b)	4 plants
2"+ caliper (b&b)	1 plant

Watering & Fertilizing

Water plants thoroughly at installation, then water each plant fully once a week for balled & burlapped plants and every 3 days for container-grown plants. Keep this schedule for 3 weeks. Water only when necessary after the first 3 week period. Hot weather and drought conditions may require more water than “normal” conditions. To be sure the plants get enough water, follow this very simple rule of thumb: one gallon of water for a one gallon plant, two gallons of water for a two gallon plant, etc. For balled and burlapped shrubs, a minimum of one gallon of water for every foot of shrub height or spread is ideal. Balled and burlapped trees need ten gallons of water for every one inch of trunk diameter. For example, a 2” caliper tree would take twenty gallons of water to water it thoroughly. Remember newly planted balled and burlapped plants usually need watered only once weekly unlike container-grown plants which like watered every third day. If the weather is cool and very wet or hot and very dry, the water schedule will have to be adjusted as necessary.



Newly planted trees and shrubs (the following does not include Rhododendrons, Azaleas and their relatives) should be fertilized at half the rate of established plants. Fertilize established plants 3-4 times a year.

April 1-15, June 1-15, August 1, October 20—November 10th. Plant-tone is an excellent organic fertilizer that has many essential trace elements as well. Rates to use on established plants: **Shrubs:** One cupful for each one foot of branch spread. **Trees:** Two and a half cups per one inch of trunk diameter. (Remember, use Holly Tone, not Plant Tone for plants such as Rhododendrons, Azaleas and their relatives) *Note:* Always scatter the fertilizer under the drip line or over the surface of the root ball and water in. Never concentrate plant tone in one spot or against the plant’s trunk. Remember, reduce rates by half for newly planted shrubs. (One pound=3 cups)

Trimming of trees and shrubs can be somewhat complicated, but

here are some general rules:

- Spring flowering plants form flower buds the previous summer and should be trimmed shortly after they bloom. Remove old flower stalks from large flowering Rhododendron.
- Roses should have all dead wood removed and any shaping done in late March.
- Evergreen shrubs such as yews, holly, and euonymous can be trimmed and shaped in mid-April through mid-August.
- Pines and spruce should be trimmed around July 4th. Only tip or trim back the **new** growth. Never trim back more than one-half of the new growth.
- Most deciduous shrubs such as barberries, privet, potentilla, etc... can be trimmed from spring through mid-summer. Most deciduous trees may be trimmed in summer or late winter. ([back to top](#))

REMEMBER:

- Cut back top of burlap after plant is set in hole 3-4 times the diameter of the root ball
- Cut off at least the top 1/3 of the burlap of a tree that has a wire basket and be sure root flare is at ground level
- Remove poly-beige and other plastic burlaps completely
- Loosen roots of container-grown plants to expose about one-inch of root ends.
- Rhododendrons, Azaleas and other like species are planted differently. Refer to our [Rhododendron-Azalea planting instructions](#)
- Water plant well and follow [watering & fertilizing instructions](#)