

vandalism, or windy conditions are concerns. If staking is necessary for support, there are two common methods: staking and guying. Staking, the most common method, uses two stakes in conjunction with a wide, flexible tie material on the lower half of the tree, which will hold the tree upright, provide flexibility, and minimize injury to the trunk (see diagram). Remove support staking and ties after the first year of growth.

8.) Mulch the base of the tree.

Mulch is simply organic matter applied to the area at the base of the tree. It acts as a blanket to hold moisture, it moderates soil temperature extremes, and it reduces competition from grass and weeds. Some good choices are leaf litter, pine straw, shredded bark, peat moss, or composted wood chips. A 2- to 4-inch layer is ideal. More than 4 inches may cause a problem with oxygen and moisture levels. When placing mulch, be sure that the actual trunk of the tree is not covered, as this may cause decay of the living bark at the base of the tree. A mulch-free area, 1 to 2 inches wide at the base of the tree, is sufficient to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay. If there is not a basin or gentle slope around the trunk, use mulch to create one.

9.) Provide follow-up care.

Keep the soil moist but not soaked; overwatering causes leaves to turn yellow or fall off. Water trees at least once a week, barring rain, and more frequently during hot weather. When the soil is dry below the surface of the mulch, it is time to water. Continue until mid-fall, tapering off for lower temperatures that require less-frequent watering.

The information presented here is based on that which appears in "New Tree Planting," a publication of the International Society of Arboriculture.

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For more on tree planting, see the following websites:

University of Maryland Extension, Home and Garden Information Center
<http://www.hgic.umd.edu/>

International Society of Arboriculture
<http://www.isa-arbor.com/>



The College Park Tree and Landscape Board encourages citizens to adopt practices that promote and protect healthy trees, shrubs and ground cover on private land. To learn more about the Tree and Landscape Board, view our website at www.collegeparkmd.gov/tree_and_landscape_board.htm.

How to Plant A Tree



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When to Plant

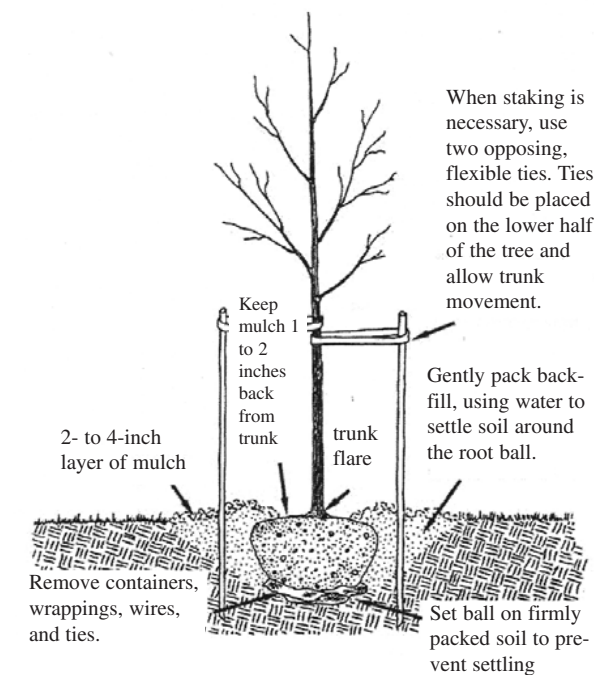
The ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is during the dormant season, in the fall after leaf drop or early spring before budbreak. Weather conditions are cool and allow plants to establish roots in the new location before spring rains and summer heat stimulate new top growth. However, trees properly cared for in the nursery or garden center, and given the appropriate care during transport to prevent damage, can be planted throughout the growing season.

Proper Planting Techniques

After selecting the appropriate species and selecting the correct site, proper site preparation before and during planting, coupled with good follow-up care, reduces the amount of time the plant experiences transplant shock and allows the tree to quickly establish in its new location. Carefully follow nine simple steps, and you can significantly reduce the stress placed on the plant at the time of planting.

1.) Dig a shallow, broad planting hole.

Make the hole wide, as much as three times the diameter of the root ball but only as deep as the root ball. It is important to make the hole wide because the roots on the newly establishing tree must push through surrounding soil in order to establish. On most planting sites in new developments, the existing soils have been compacted and are unsuitable for healthy root growth. Breaking up the soil in a large area around the tree provides the newly emerging roots room to grow into loose soil to hasten establishment. This is aided by amending the back fill with good topsoil or composted material.



2.) Remove tree container.

Carefully cutting down the sides of the container may make this easier. If the root ball is wrapped, cut and remove any fabric, plastic, string, and wire from around the trunk and root ball to facilitate growth (see diagram). Inspect the root ball for circling roots and cut or remove them. Break apart the root ball to encourage a wide spreading root mass—it will not hurt the tree.

3.) Identify the trunk flare or root surface.

The trunk flare is where the roots spread at the base of the tree. This point should be visible after the tree has been planted (see diagram). If the trunk flare is not visible, soil will need to be removed from the top of the root ball to expose it. With smaller, containerized trees ensure that the root surface is showing.

4.) Place the tree at the proper height.

Before placing the tree in the hole, check to see that the hole has been dug to the proper depth. The majority of the roots on the newly planted tree will develop in the top 12–18 inches of soil. If the tree is planted too deeply, new roots will have difficulty developing because of a lack of oxygen. It is better to plant the tree a little high, 1 to 2 inches above the root surface, than to plant it at or below the original growing level. This planting level will allow for some settling (see diagram).

5.) Straighten the tree in the hole.

Before you begin backfilling, have someone view the tree from several directions to confirm that the tree is straight. Once you begin backfilling, it is difficult to reposition the tree.

6.) Fill the hole gently but firmly.

Once your fill is supplemented with top soil or composted material, fill the hole about one-third full and settle the back fill with water. Fill the remainder of the hole, taking care to firmly pack soil to eliminate air pockets that may cause roots to dry out. To avoid this problem, add the soil a few inches at a time and settle with water. Continue this process until the hole is filled and the tree is firmly planted. It is not recommended to apply fertilizer at the time of planting. Create a basin around the perimeter of the root ball using the excess soil, which will help hold water for absorption by the root ball.

7.) Stake the tree, if necessary.

If the tree is grown and dug properly at the nursery, staking for support will not be necessary in most home landscape situations. Studies have shown that trees establish more quickly and develop stronger trunks and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting. However, protective staking may be required on sites where lawn mower damage,