

Proper Tree Planting Practices



The most important stage in the life of an urban tree is when it gets planted. It pays off to take the time to do it right with a few basic pointers on planting.

The Right Tree in the Right Place

Make sure the tree you have chosen will fit in the space you have selected for planting. There should be plenty of room for the tree when it reaches maturity, both above and below ground.

Safety

Do not dig a planting hole until you are sure there are no underground utilities in the immediate area. Contact Gopher State One Call at 651-454-8388 (in the Twin Cities Metro area of Minnesota) before digging and planting.

The Right Tree in the Right Place

An important step in tree planting is to locate the root flare, the place where the main roots extend laterally from the trunk. If the root flare is buried too deep, problems can result that shorten the life of the tree. The root flare should be visible at the soil surface after planting.

Ball and burlapped trees have their root system held together by a wrapping of burlap and a wire basket. Remove twine and the top part of the burlap to allow access to find the root flare. Roots that are circling can be straightened, if possible, or else removed. When the position of the flare is located, the tree can be moved into the planting hole. Remove as much as possible of the burlap and wire basket and discard them.

Containerized trees come from the nursery in pots of plastic. As with ball and burlapped trees, you may need to remove soil from the top of the root ball to find the flare. Start by removing the tree from the container. If there are circling roots, saw off the sides of the root ball in a box pattern.



Containerized trees often have circling roots.



Finding the root flare with a spray of water.



The root flare is often buried under several inches of soil.

Digging a Hole and Planting

Dig the planting hole 2-3 times as wide as the root ball, with a wide and shallow shape like a saucer. The hole only needs to be deep enough to keep the root flare near the surface.

Position the tree in the center of the planting hole. Backfill with soil that was removed from the hole. Water the hole to settle out air pockets in the soil. Double check to ensure the root flare is visible.

Finish up by applying a layer of mulch to the area. Place wood chips to a depth of 4 inches, avoiding direct contact with the tree trunk.



Removing containerized tree from container.

Digging a Hole and Planting

Water is critical to the establishment of a newly planted tree. Apply water once a week as a saturating trickle from a garden hose for the first full season after planting your tree. Adjust according to weather conditions if necessary: more if it has been hot and dry, less if it has been wet and rainy.



Planting a new tree.