

How to Plant a Tree

- Plant your tree as soon as possible after you receive it. Do not let the roots dry out! Store in a cool shady place until planting. Keep the roots moist but don't put them in standing water. See other side for bare root pre-planting instructions.
 - Be sure to place your tree in the right place so it gets the amount of sunlight it needs and put it in soil that is well drained (dries out and doesn't stay wet) or moist depending on the species. Most young trees benefit from sun for part of the day with some light shade okay. Seedlings can be planted close together and then transplanted further apart in 1-2 years.
 - In a very open windy area, some pine branches can be woven into protective fencing around the tree to shelter it, especially in winter. Burlap can also be used.
 - Clip off any roots that are much longer than the others or are twisted around the other roots or the pot soil.
 - Roots should be at least 8 - 10 inches long for every 1/2 inch of stem diameter, in general. Your seedling may have shorter roots.
 - Use the soil from the hole you dig and don't add compost or fertilizer. Keep the top few inches of soil from the hole in a separate pile and put that back last. You can add a small amount of top soil to the mix if the soil is very poor. Make sure water drains out when poured in the bottom of the hole before you plant there. The hole should be 2-3 times the diameter of the pot or roots, but only as deep as needed to keep the stem just above ground level and the longest roots or the root ball touching the bottom of the hole. Place the tree so the bulge at the base of the stem is just below ground level, then add the soil. Hold bare root seedlings at the right level as soil is added. Then, lightly pull the tree up until this bulge (the root collar) is about 1 inch above ground level. With light hand or finger pressure, push the soil down while keeping the tree straight. The bottom of the stem bulge should be right at ground level. Do not push hard to compact the soil but just enough to stabilize the tree. Water the tree immediately to remove air pockets from the root area.
 - Placing some leaf litter on top around the tree to mulch it, but keep the leaves away from the tree's stem. The mulch layer should be thin, around 2 inches deep. If you want a formal look, you can add 1 inch of leaves and then 1 inch or so of bark mulch on top of that. Additional leaves can be placed around the tree just for winter.
 - Water your tree the first three days, then twice a week for a month, then once per week for the rest of the growing season (through October 15), unless it's raining that week. Water twice a week during any very hot dry periods the first year, otherwise water weekly when it doesn't rain for 3 years.
 - For forest plantings where frequent watering isn't an option, water for the first month then expect some mortality and plant additional trees assuming some won't survive.
 - To protect from deer, add fencing that is 4 or 5 feet tall and at least a foot from the tree on all sides. Stake the fencing. Add wire mesh around its stem from the ground to 1 foot high or more. These steps are necessary to protect your tree from browsing including winter browsing of the trunk by rodents. Tree guards and tubes can be used.
- Learn more at <https://www.arborday.org> and See our website for more resources at waldocountysoilandwater.org.

