DIY Tree Planting & Care Guide

Planting Instructions

You've received your tree, now comes the fun part! Here are a few quick reminders before you get started with planting:

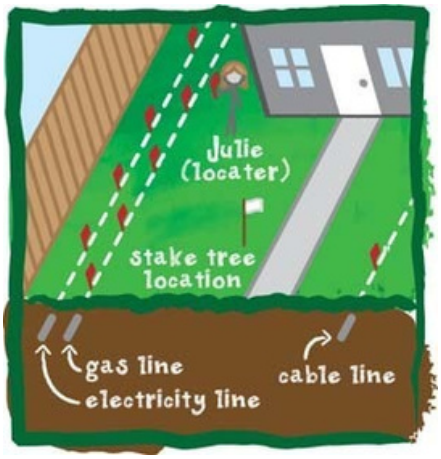
- Before you begin digging, **make sure all underground utilities have been located and marked**. Safety first!
- After locating utility lines, it's important to **plant and water it right away**. The sooner your tree is in the ground, the happier and healthier it will be.
- Remember, transplanting is a big change for a tree. During this time, it may show signs of "**transplant shock**," such as slower growth or reduced vigor. If your tree arrived with leaves, flowers, or fruit already on it, it's completely normal for it to drop them during the current season. We take great care to ship your trees safely and securely, but a little wilting, stress, or leaf loss can't always be avoided. With proper site preparation, careful planting, and consistent follow-up care, you'll help your tree settle in quickly and thrive in its new home.

Follow the simple steps in this guide to reduce stress on your tree and set it up for long-term success to grow for generations to come!

1. Prepare the Site

Prior to planting your tree, you will need to call J.U.L.I.E at 811 or http://www.illinois1call.com/ for underground utilities location. This service is free and allows you to have an exact idea where all potential underground conflicts are located. It is best to have your utilities located at least 3 days prior to planting your trees; it usually takes 72 hours for them to mark all of your utilities.

Make sure there are no old tree stumps, and that the planting location is the appropriate distance away from any structures:



- Small trees (under 25 feet): 8–10 feet away.
- Medium trees (25–50 feet): 15–20 feet away.
- Large trees (over 50 feet): 20–50 feet away

If you are having your trees delivered, our crew will place them right next to the planting location for you. You must place a stake, flag, or marker exactly where you plan on planting your tree. It is not a good idea to pre-dig the planting hole for the tree, wait until the tree has arrived so you know the exact size of the root ball.

Planting Instructions

2. Dig a shallow, broad planting hole

The most common mistake when planting a tree is digging a hole too deep or too narrow. As a general rule, make the hole approximately 1.5 times the diameter of the root ball, but only as deep as the root ball. On balled and burlapped trees, the tree should be planted no deeper than the top of the root ball. On potted trees, this is the top of the soil in the pot. When you have finished digging, measure both the hole and the root ball several times to make sure the hole you have dug is the proper width and depth.

3. Do not remove the basket or burlap

Your balled and burlapped tree will come with burlap and a wire basket surrounding the root ball. DO NOT remove either the burlap or the wire basket. These will both be left on after the tree is planted, and will help hold the root ball together while the tree is pushing out new roots. The metal and the burlap will simply rust and rot away over time; they will not in any way inhibit the growth of the tree. For potted trees, you must remove the pot before planting.

4. Roll or place the tree in the hole

Before you place the tree in the hole, double check that the hole is the correct width and depth for the root ball. The majority of the roots on the newly planted tree will develop in the top 12 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 than to plant it at or below the original growing level. This planting level will allow for some settling. Measure the hole one final time, because once you roll the tree in the hole you will not get it back out!

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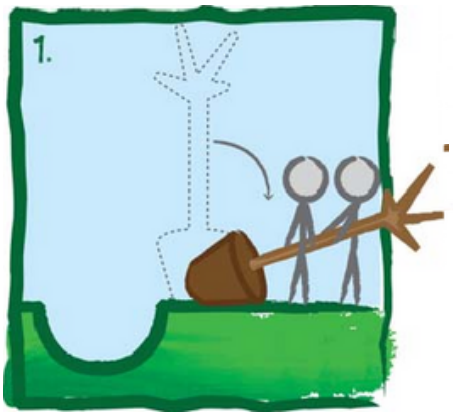
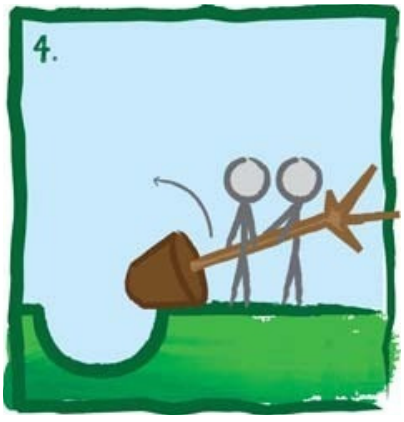
4. Roll or place the tree in the hole, cont.



This part requires at least 2 capable adults, or even 3 if possible. Carefully grab the trunk of the tree and pull it down so that the tree is lying on its side. One person should keep hold of the trunk of the tree and "steer" the tree into the hole while another is rolling the root ball. Roll the root ball to the edge of the hole and then the person holding the trunk should rotate the tree until the bottom of the root ball is hanging several inches over the open hole and the rest of the root ball is still resting on the edge of the hole. Have the person that was rolling the root ball grab onto the trunk as well, so both people are now holding onto the trunk of the tree. Slowly begin to pull the trunk of the tree upwards until it is teetering on the edge of the hole. While still holding the trunk place your foot onto the edge of the root ball and gently slide it into the hole.



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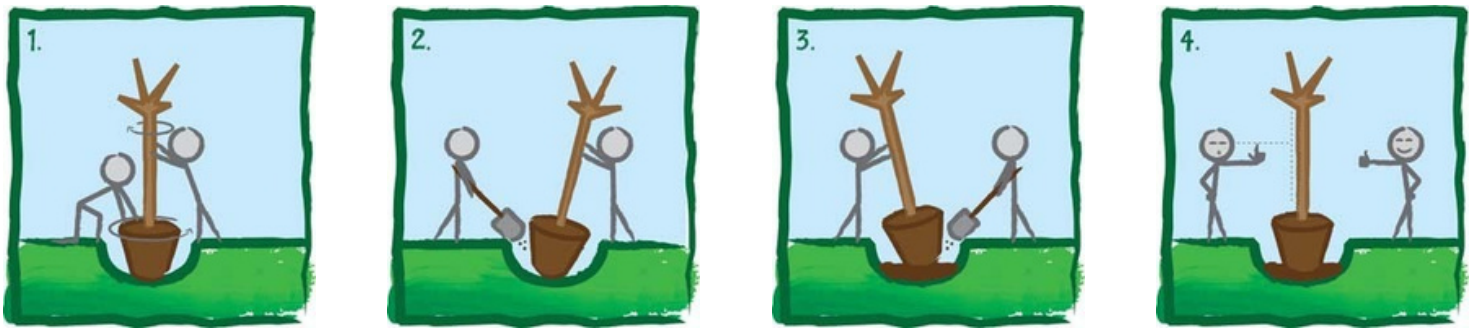
5. Orient the tree

Before backfilling with soil, orient the tree. You can spin the tree by grabbing onto the trunk and rocking it back and forth while one person is spinning the root ball. Spinning a tree can be quite difficult, consider hooking something onto the wire basket and pulling on the root ball to rotate it (you could use a claw hammer, pick axe, etc.). Situate it so that branches won't be in the way of pedestrian or car traffic. If you prefer a particular side of the tree, turn it toward a prominent viewpoint (such as your kitchen window). Have someone view the tree from several directions to confirm that the tree is straight. You can also use your shovel as a lever to pry the root ball until the tree is straight. Backfill the hole around the tree and continue to reposition the tree until it is standing straight on its own. Once you begin backfilling, it is difficult to reposition the tree, so try and get it as straight as possible here.



6. Cut the burlap and twine

Now that you have the tree in the ground, and slightly backfilled, it is time to cut the burlap on the top of the root ball. With a sharp knife, cut all the twine that holds the root ball together; make sure to cut all the twine that is wrapped around the trunk of the tree. Cut off the burlap around the top of the root ball so that all you see on the top of the root ball is dirt; you do not need to cut the burlap off of the sides of the root ball, only the top. Stomp or bend down the tabs on the wire basket where the twine was tied so that they are not exposed once the tree is backfilled.

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7. Fill the hole gently, but firmly

Fill the hole about one-third full and gently, but firmly, pack the soil around the base of the roots. Fill the remainder of the hole, taking care to firmly pack soil to eliminate air pockets that may cause roots to dry out. Pack down the soil as you backfill. Using the heel of your foot or the handle end of the shovel, press down firmly to collapse any large air pockets in the soil. This will help stabilize the tree. Don't wait until the planting is finished; press down every few shovels of soil. Backfill all the way around the edges of the root ball so that the backfilled soil is level with the top of the root ball. Backfill a little more around the edge to create a berm, which will help hold water and allow for the soil to settle. You do not need to put any extra dirt on top of the root ball, or pile dirt up around the tree trunk. It is not recommended to apply fertilizer at the time of planting.

8. Water your tree

Build a watering basin around the root ball by creating a berm a little larger than the root perimeter. This concentrates water to the roots. A tree that has dry roots can stand in a moist backfill without absorbing water. You'll need to water your tree thoroughly after planting with about 15 gallons of water. Monitor your tree's water needs at least once a week for the first month. This will give you an idea as to the frequency your tree will need water growing in your particular soil.

9. Mulch your tree

Cover the entire planting area with a 3 to 4-inch layer of mulch, but keep it 2 inches from the base of the trunk. Mulch keeps the topsoil temperate for root growth, reduces surface evaporation of water, slows or stops weed and grass growth around the tree's base, and prevents a hard crust from forming on the soil surface.

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10. Stake the tree, if necessary

Studies have shown that trees establish more quickly and develop stronger trunk and root systems if they are not staked at the time of planting. However, protective staking may be required on sites where windy conditions are concerns or a potted tree is planted. Stake the tree loosely for protection or support, if needed. Use only soft, pliable tree ties or twine. Do not use wire, which can cut into a trunk. If the trunk can't stand up on its own, stake it so that it stands upright. The stakes should be placed outside of the root ball. Plan to remove stakes as soon as the tree can support itself.

11. 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. A valuable asset to any landscape, trees provide a long-lasting source of beauty and enjoyment for people of all ages. When questions arise about the care of your tree, be sure to consult your local ISA Certified Arborist or a Spring Grove Nursery crew member for assistance. Happy Planting!

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Benefits of Trees

Environmental

A deciduous tree can intercept almost 800 gallons of stormwater per year; a mature evergreen can intercept more than 4,000 gallons per year. - *Penn State Extension*

Social

Neighborhoods with more trees have been shown to have a lower crime rate. Chicago public housing residents with nearby trees and natural landscapes reported 25% fewer acts of domestic aggression and violence. - *University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

Economic

Trees can stimulate economic development, attracting new business and tourism. Retail areas are more attractive to shoppers, apartments rent more quickly, tenants stay longer, and space is more valuable to sell or rent. - *The Arbor Day Foundation*

Health

In laboratory research, visual exposure to settings with trees has produced significant recovery from stress within five minutes, as indicated by changes in blood pressure and muscle tension. - *Dr. Roger S. Ulrich Texas A&M University*

Energy

Trees lower surface and air temperatures by providing shade. Shaded surfaces may be 20–45°F cooler than the peak temperatures of unshaded areas. - *U.S. EPA*

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Environmental Benefits of Trees

Roots collect storm water run-off

Beautifies communities and improves mental health

Provides habitat for native creatures

Filters pollutants out of the air

Saves on energy costs for homes and buildings

What will your tree do?

Every tree you plant will provide these benefits each year:

Year 1 — $12 Annual Benefits
- Eliminate 74 gallons of storm water runoff
- Conserve 20 kilowatt/hours energy from cooling effects of shade
- Reduce Carbon in the atmosphere by 54 pounds

Year 5 — $68 Annual Benefits
- Eliminate 517 gallons of storm water runoff
- Conserve 94 kilowatt/hours energy from cooling effects of shade
- Reduce Carbon in the atmosphere by 294 pounds

Year 10 — $149 Annual Benefits
- Eliminate 1,278 gallons of storm water runoff
- Conserve 208 kilowatt/hours energy from cooling effects of shade
- Reduce Carbon in the atmosphere by 725 pounds

Year 20 — $241 Annual Benefits
- Eliminate 2,867 gallons of storm water runoff
- Conserve 284 kilowatt/hours energy from cooling effects of shade
- Reduce Carbon in the atmosphere by 1090 pounds

Just from one tree, that's over $18,310 in benefits over the tree's lifetime, 306,029 gallons of storm water runoff eliminated, 25,600 kilowatt/hours of energy conserved, and 97,224 pounds of carbon reduced in our atmosphere!

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What an easy way to make a big difference in our environment!

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