

Tree Planting Checklist

By Tara Schatz

- Before planting a new tree
 - Decide where you want to plant your tree.

Be sure it has enough room to reach its full potential and where it will not interfere with other plantings or power lines.
 - Research your options.

Consider whether a tree will grow well in your climate, whether it will block your view, and whether it will require more care than you can provide.
 - Be sure it's safe to dig.

Ask your local municipality if your chosen spot interferes with water, sewer, or power lines.
 - Wait for the right season.

The best time to plant a tree is when the ground has thawed, but the trees are still dormant. Of course, this only applies to cooler, four-season climates. In warm climates, winter is a great time to plant.
- Planting day
 - Dig a hole.

A hole that is twice as deep and wide as your tree's root ball will give it plenty of room to grow.
 - Loosely add some of the dirt you just took out.

Do not pack it down; it should be light and fluffy.
 - Remove the tree from the pot and unwrap all protective coverings from the root ball.
 - Place your tree's roots into the hole.

Be sure that the ground is at the same level on your tree's trunk as it was in the planting container. If you need to add or remove dirt from the bottom of the hole, do it now.
 - Fill your planting hole loosely with dirt.

Do not add fertilizer, compost, or any other amendments. Fertilizing at this stage will encourage your tree's root to grow inward instead of spreading out.
 - Water your tree with plenty of water.
 - Pack down the dirt in your planting hole.

There should be a slight depression where the hole used to be. This will help your tree collect water and channel it to the roots.
 - Mulch your tree with wood chips.

Cover your planting hole with a 3-inch layer of mulch. Make sure to keep the mulch a few inches away from your tree's trunk.
 - Stake your tree.

It is wise to stake your tree for the first year to keep it growing straight. Use a wooden stake or a piece of rebar and pound it into the ground about a foot from your new tree. Use a broad, flexible material to tie your tree to the stake. A thick band or strong elastic will work well.
- After planting
 - Water your tree at least once a week.
 - Keep weeds and grass from growing in your tree's mulched area.
 - Remove the stake after the first growing season.
 - Keep your tree properly pruned.

Every tree has different pruning requirements, but there is a lot of information available online.
 - Fertilize with a well-balanced fertilizer during the second spring.
 - Inspect your tree for signs of pests or diseases every couple of months, especially during the summer.
 - Enjoy the beauty and shade your tree provides your family and your neighborhood.