

sary for support, two stakes used in conjunction with a wide, flexible tie material on the lower half of the tree will hold the tree upright, provide flexibility, and minimize injury to the trunk. Remove support staking and ties after the first year of growth.

7. **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. Doing so may cause decay of the living bark at the base of the tree.
8. **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.

This article was adapted from "Trees are Good – Tree Care Information" published by the International Society of Arboriculture in 2005. Additional sources used were ANSI Standard A300 Part 6 National Tree Planting Standard and the Idaho Department of Lands.

If you have questions about this newsletter or the Community Forestry Assistance Program, please contact Tera King with Northwest Management, Inc. at 208-883-4488 ext. 133.

Community Forestry Assistant Newsletter



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Guide for New Tree Planting

New Tree Planting

The ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is during the dormant season - in the fall after leaf drop or early spring before bud break. This allows 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. Carefully follow these eight 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 distance from the bottom of the root ball to the trunk flare (also called the root collar). 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 expand into loose soil to hasten establishment.
2. **Identify the trunk flare.** The trunk flare is where the roots spread at the base of the tree. This point should be partially visible after the tree has been planted. Unfortunately, often the trunk flare is not visible, and you will have to remove some soil from the top of the root ball. Find it so you can determine how deep the hole needs to be for proper planting.
3. **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 and no more. 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. Planted correctly, the tree's roots will grow down and out into that rooting zone. As in nature, the trunk and roots will be at different heights, and won't come in contact with each other as they grow larger. Planted too deep, the roots will grow up and out. Since the roots and trunk are now at the same height, as each grows

larger they will someday meet, and stem girdling roots will cause early decline of the tree. It is better to plant the tree a little high, 2 to 3 inches above the base of the trunk flare, than to plant it at or below the original growing level. This planting level will allow for some settling. To avoid damage when setting the tree in the hole, always lift the tree by the root ball and never by the trunk. Be sure to remove containers or, if balled and burlapped, as much of the burlap and wire basket as possible.

4. **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.

5. **Fill the hole gently but firmly.** Fill the hole about one-third full and use water to help settle the soil around the base of the root ball. Then, 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. Be careful not to damage the trunk or roots in the process. Fill the remainder of the hole, taking care to settle the soil to eliminate air pockets that may cause roots to dry out.

It's best to 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.

6. **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 trunk 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, vandalism, or windy conditions are concerns. If staking is neces-

Proper Tree Planting Diagram

