

# Tree Planting Tips

It is imperative customers planting container trees remove the outer one inch of the root plug sides and bottom prior to planting. Cutting the root plug into a cube shape with a 12" pruning blade seems the fastest and most complete method (a reciprocating saw does an excellent job). This reduces the opportunity for circling roots to grow unimpeded and potentially weaken or kill the tree as it matures.

There are different guidelines for tree planting based on profession. Arborists differ from Landscape Contractors and Landscape Architects may differ from Nurserymen. Below are procedures that accommodate these differing professions. Dig the hole twice as wide as the container plug/root ball **but** only as deep as the root plug/ball. Preferably hand dig the last 3-6" so the root plug/ball sits on compacted or undisturbed soil and will not settle deeper than originally planted. Measure the depth of the root ball from the bottom to the base of the tree trunk. Verify the top of the root plug/ball, (as measured above) will be level, or slightly higher (3"), than the existing grade once placed in the hole. Trees are often killed, or have reduced vigor when planted too deep. Backfill with the native soil or a mix of no more than half soil amendments and native soil. Settle the soil with abundant water, mulch if desired and stake the tree to avoid wind damage, placing the stakes outside the planting hole.



For planting balled and burlap trees follow the procedure outlined above. Additionally, handle the plant by the root ball not the top, being careful to avoid tearing the burlap or distorting the shape of the root ball. Avoid handling if the root ball is waterlogged. Place the tree in the hole with the twine, burlap and basket attached to verify the correct depth and alignment, this makes it easier to make adjustments if needed. Then remove the twine, burlap and the top two horizontal rings of the wire basket using wire cutters.

## Additional Tips

Trees planted in irrigated turf benefit from allowing the turf to dry in September, then water the trees heavy before the ground freezes. This allows the trees to harden off for winter.

Mountain Ash should not be over watered, planted on sites with poor drainage, or planted deep. Planting slightly above grade (3-6") is beneficial for those selections that are slow to enter dormancy in the fall. This allows excess water to drain away from the tree and is especially useful where turf watering continues late into the fall.

Planting Poplars and Cottonwoods should be avoided in late summer (mid-August/mid-September). Watering these selections heavily (10 gallons of water per 1" caliper) at planting, again in early October and finally prior to freeze up, will aid in a successful planting and overwintering.

Crabapples seem to benefit from thinning— removing 1/4 to 1/3 of the new growth in the spring after transplanting. This is especially true for B&B specimens.



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