

How to Transplant Trees and Shrubs

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The best time to transplant deciduous, bare-rooted trees and shrubs is in the early spring while they are still dormant, when danger of severe winter temperatures is past and the ground is no longer frozen.

Balled and burlapped or container-grown trees and shrubs can be transplanted nearly any time of the year, but they will become established better if transplanted in the spring or early summer. This gives them a chance to grow a strong root system before severe cold temperatures set in. Evergreen trees and shrubs of larger size should be moved, balled and burlapped.

Plant trees and shrubs as soon as possible after they are received from the nursery. Don't let the roots dry. If roots are bare soak them for a half an hour in a container of water and keep damp until planting. Keep them away from heat and out of the wind.

Planting Bare-rooted Trees and Shrubs

Dig the planting hole for bare-rooted trees and shrubs wide enough that the roots can be spread in their natural position and deep enough that the plant can be placed at its original depth. Separate the topsoil and the subsoil as you dig.

As you place the tree, hold it at the same depth it was originally and spread the roots. Don't allow the roots to double back because they can encircle and girdle the tree as they grow. Add about a shovelful of topsoil around the roots and firm it to eliminate air pockets. When the roots are covered, add more soil, firm and tamp it. Add water when the hole is about three-fourths full. When the water has soaked into the soil, fill the hole with the remaining soil, leaving the top two inches loose and friable. Do not tamp wet soil or it will become compacted and will exclude air.

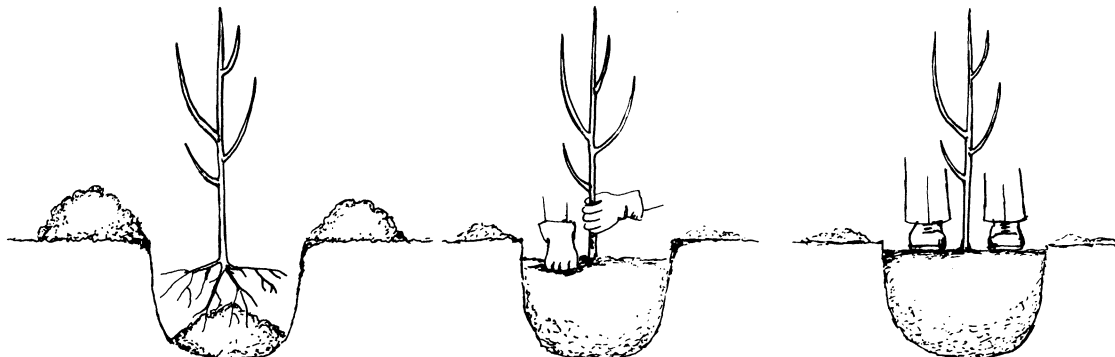
If you prefer to "puddle in" trees and shrubs, start by covering the roots with soil and be sure it is settled around the roots. Then add water to about half the depth of the hole. Add more soil to the water. By the time the water has soaked away, the soil should be firmly settled around the tree or shrub. Do not tamp because this will compact the soil and exclude air from the roots. Finish with about two or three inches of loose soil.

Some people leave a basin or depression around the tree or shrub to catch water; others hill the soil around the tree so excess water will drain away. The best method is to provide a shallow trench around the tree just beyond the spread of the roots. This will help catch moisture, but will avoid funneling water back to the trunk of the tree.

Water the tree or shrub when you plant, even if the soil is moist. The water will help settle the soil around the roots and eliminate air pockets. Also water your young trees more often than the established ones, because the young tree has a small root system that will dry out rather quickly. Be sure the entire root system is wet.

Planting Balled-and-Burlapped or Container-grown Trees

Dig the planting hole for balled-and-burlapped or container-grown trees and shrubs about two feet wider than the diameter of the root ball or container, and just deep enough so the tree or shrub will be at the same depth it grew originally. Don't dig the hole any deeper than the depth of the soil in the container or root ball — preferably, keep it about two inches shallower. Avoid loose soil in the bottom of the hole because it will settle and your tree will sink deeper than intended.

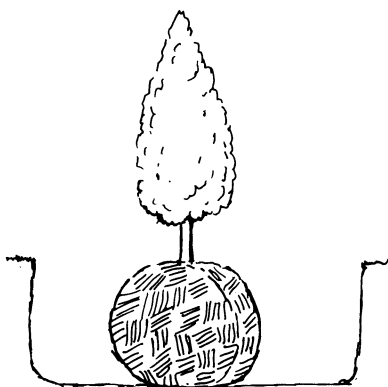


Spread out roots.

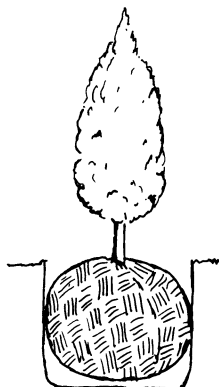
Firm soil about roots.

Tamp soil firmly.

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Dig hole no deeper than depth of soil in container or root ball, preferably two inches less. Diameter should be about two feet greater than root ball.



Hole is too narrow for proper planting. It is also too deep; when the plant settles, it will be planted too deep.

Keep the burlap intact as you place balled-and-burlapped trees or shrubs in the hole, but cut away as much of the burlap as possible after the plant is in place. Burlap, particularly new burlap, may rot very slowly if left around the ball. If the surface of the ball is crusted, break this crust before you fill the hole. And as you fill the hole around the ball, firm the filling soil and settle it with water.

For plants in pots, remove the root ball and plant as you would balled-and-burlapped trees and shrubs. If the plant is in a can, use metal shears to cut the sides of the can from top to bottom, making three cuts so the segments can be folded out. This will give you access to the root ball. Be careful not to break this ball. Most nurserymen will cut the sides of the can when they sell the plant.

Care After Planting

The soil in your yard may be lighter or heavier than the soil of the container-grown plant. This can cause trouble in watering. So be sure when you water that you have soaked the ball as well as the surrounding soil.

Balled-and-burlapped trees and shrubs generally need no pruning after planting. Bare-rooted plants need to be pruned to

compensate for loss of roots in transplanting. Remove about one-third of the top growth from nursery-grown trees, about one-half of the top growth of trees or shrubs brought in from the woods or from a neighbor.

Prune after transplanting because branches may be broken in transport or in the planting operation. Remove undesirable limbs such as crossing branches, broken or diseased branches, weak branches, etc. If one side has too many branches, thin to balance the tree or shrub. If you have central-leader trees such as oaks, do not cut out the central leader.

Be sure to remove all identification tags and wires from the trunk and limbs to prevent girdling the tree.

Deciduous shrubs also should be pruned after planting. Remove broken and weak stems, thin stems where overcrowded and head back the remaining stems to about half their original length. This pruning compensates for the feeder roots lost or damaged in transplanting.

Unless the wind is severe, trees less than two inches in diameter will grow better and stand the wind better if not supported with stakes. Generally, a tree with a ball of earth needs no additional support. However, bare-rooted trees more than two inches in diameter generally should be braced with three guy wires. Fasten one wire to a stake on the side of the tree that is against the prevailing wind. Space the other two wires equally around the tree. To protect the tree bark from damage, place a piece of rubber hose in a circle around the tree and attach the guy wires to this circle.

Remove the wire braces just as soon as they are no longer needed, usually a year later. The tree should grow its stabilizing roots better than when braced.

You can place a six-inch board parallel to the southwest side of the tree to shade it from afternoon sun and help prevent sunscald. You can also wrap trunks of newly planted trees with strips of burlap or paper to prevent sunscald.

I do not recommend fertilizing the new tree or shrub until it has a chance to get established. After the tree is established, add a half-pound of commercial fertilizer containing 5, 10 or 20 percent nitrogen. Use the fertilizer either in dry form or mixed with water and sprinkle this in a foot-wide band on loose soil all around the tree. Keep the fertilizer about six inches from the trunk. Then water. The water will carry the nitrogen to the roots. Be sure that the water and fertilizer do not run down the trunk of the tree to burn the roots.