

# Tree Planting Guide

Spring is tree planting time but before we start to plant, many things need to be taken into consideration.

Most homeowners plant trees for their beauty, but a well-situated tree also can reduce energy costs by shading a house from the sun's rays in summer and providing shelter from harsh winter winds. They act as noise buffers, and provide homes for wildlife, making your home a more pleasant place to live.

Trees also can reduce soil erosion by slowing the movement of water that would otherwise carry topsoil away. And since trees take carbon dioxide and other pollutants from the air and release oxygen, they help improve air quality.

Proper selection and planting are critical to ensure your new tree's long-term survival. But planting is only one component of a much larger process. Three to five years of care is required for a seedling to be considered 'established.'

## Planning and Tree Selection

Consider the limitations of the planting site, the purpose for the tree(s), and each tree's unique growing requirements

before selecting the type of tree to be purchased.

Windbreaks and tree plantings slow the wind and provide shelter and food for wildlife. Trees can shelter livestock and crops; they are used as barriers to slow winds that blow across large cropped fields and through farmsteads. Windbreaks can be beneficial in reducing blowing and drifting snow along roadways. Farmstead and field windbreaks and tree plantings are key components of a conservation system. They also help prevent dust particles from adding to smog over urban areas.



### Evergreen or deciduous? -

Evergreen trees keep their leaves all year. They are good trees for privacy, wind breaks and hot areas. Some examples of evergreens are: White Spruce, White Pine, and Balsam Fir.

Deciduous trees lose their leaves in fall or winter. They are good trees to plant on the south side of your home to provide shade in the summer and warmth in the winter when the sun can shine through. Some examples of deciduous trees are: oak, maple and ash trees.



## What Size of Tree

Different types of trees vary in their height and width. Based on the measurements in the areas where you would like the trees, consider the height and width each tree when mature.

## What Else Should You Consider?

Trees can add more than shade, wind block or wild animal habitat. Consider trees for their:

Flowers: Flowers add color to the landscape and attract butterflies, hummingbirds and other wildlife.

Fall color: Red, orange, yellow are all colors that add beauty in the fall.

Shape: Trees can be oval, pyramidal, round, spreading, vase-shaped or narrow, all add interest to your landscape.

Fruit: Many varieties of fruits can be grown, providing food from your garden.

## Putting It All Together

Decide whether you have enough room to plant in the areas you have selected. Beware of underground and overhead utilities - contact Diggers Hotline prior to planting trees around homes, roadways, etc. Proper placement of trees is critical for your enjoyment and their long-term survival. Check with local authorities about regulations pertaining to proper placement of trees.

Before planting your tree, consider the tree's ultimate size. When the tree nears maturity, will it be too near your house or other structures? Be

considerate of neighbors. An evergreen tree planted on your north side may block the winter sun from your next door neighbor. Because most vegetables and flowers require considerable amounts of sun, consider how the placement of trees will affect these gardens.

## Care of Trees Prior to Planting

Improper care of seedlings between delivery and planting is one of the greatest causes of mortality. It's best to plant your trees within 7 days of delivery (ideally 1-2 days). Keep trees in a cool dark place below 50 degrees if possible. If you must store your tree more than 7 days, refrigerate trees at 35-40 degrees or open the bundle, separate the seedlings and place them in a trench, cover the roots with loose soil, and fill the trench with soil. Keep soil moist in trench and protect roots from exposure to air.

## Planting Your Trees

A properly planted and maintained tree will grow faster and live longer than one that is incorrectly planted. Trees can be planted almost any time of the year as long as the ground is not frozen. Late winter, or early spring is a good time to plant your trees.

Dig each hole to fit the root system. Ensure the planting hole is deep enough so roots point downward. Planting with the roots pointing upward, "J" rooting, results in a dead seedling when the roots break the soil surface. Plant trees with the root collar at about the same depth

or slightly deeper than when the trees were still in the nursery bed.

Make sure the tree is straight before backfilling. Use the same soil that came out of the pit to back-fill soil, gently tamping soil to ensure good root contact. Saturate the entire backfilled soil with water. A slow gentle soaking is best. Water the trees as needed during the dry time, especially for the first year.

Spacing is important. When planting seedlings, consider the height and spread to which they will eventually grow and the primary use of the planting. As a general rule follow these guidelines:

<u>Purpose of Planting</u>	<u>Spacing</u>
Erosion Control	3-6'
Reforestation	8-12'
Wildlife Shrubs	3-6'
Windbreaks	5-12'

### Fertilizing

Fertilizer use on new seedlings is generally a poor idea. Do not put any manure in the planting hole. Do not use nitrogen until the roots have had at least one growing season.

### Mulching

Products include wood chips, saw, peeler shavings, rotted sawdust, and corn cobs. Keep these alternative products less than three inches deep to avoid rodent problems. Shape the mulch into a doughnut 2-3 feet wide, leaving a small gap near the tree. Do not mound mulch onto the trunk of the tree.

### Weeding

Eliminate weeds around each seedling for at least two feet. This may be accomplished by using mulches, hand pulling, mowing (watch out for the seedling), hoeing or chemically treating. Roundup® herbicide can be sprayed, under low pressure, on weeds near seedlings. Cover seedling with a bucket to keep spray off seeding. When hoeing, use care to avoid damage to shallow roots.

### Maintenance

For the first year or two, especially after a week or so of especially hot or dry weather, watch your trees closely for signs of moisture stress. If you see leaf wilting or hard, caked soil, water the trees well and slowly enough to allow the water to soak in. This will encourage deep root growth.

Some species of evergreen trees may need protection against winter sun and wind. A thorough watering in the fall before the ground freezes is recommended. Spray solutions are available to help prevent drying of foliage during the winter.

Young trees need protection against rodents, frost cracks, sunscald and lawn mowers. Mice and rabbits frequently girdle small trees. Since the tissues that transport nutrients in the tree are located just under the bark, a girdled tree often dies in the spring when growth resumes. Using plastic guards are inexpensive and an easy control method.