

Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy

Tree Planting Tips

1. **Location:** Make sure tree planting location is suitable for the size and shape of the mature version of the tree to be planted. Be sure that there are no underground utilities where you will be digging.
2. **Selection of Tree Species:** Research the various tree species that are available to make sure the chosen specimen will have the attributes you desire, such as growing well in your soil (native tree species are likely to do best in your soil), providing shade, good for wildlife, etc.
3. **When to Plant:** The best time to plant is in the fall after all of the leaves have dropped from the tree. The second best time is in the early spring before leaves are out.
4. **Planting Hole:** The planting hole should be 2-3 times the width of the root ball and the same depth as the height of the root ball. Check the depth of the planting hole to make sure it is the right depth before placing the tree in the hole, since the root ball and tree might be too heavy to pull back out of the hole if the depth needs is not right.
5. **Trunk Flare:** The depth is just right if the trunk flare is partially visible after planting has been completed.
6. **Containerized Trees:** Remove tree from container or if necessary, carefully remove the container with a utility knife. Loosen up the roots to prevent “circling roots”, a condition that will cause problems as the tree matures.
7. **Burlapped Trees:** On burlapped trees make sure the wire cage around the root ball is removed (use wire cutters) to prevent the wire from restricting growth as the roots and root flare expand over time. Remove the burlap from the top of the root ball with a sharp knife. Burlap on top of the root ball can act like a wick if exposed to air and draw moisture away from the soil. Burlap on the bottom of the root ball will decompose.
8. **Placing the Tree in the Planting Hole:** If at all possible place tree in the planting hole by sliding or picking up the root ball and gently placing it in the hole. Avoid lifting the tree by its trunk since moving it this way can damage the tree. Make sure the tree is straight by looking at it from two or more directions. Adjust if necessary.

9. **Filling the Planting Hole:** Fill the planting hole about one-third full with a combination of peat humus, top soil and native soil. Break up large soil clods. Gently compact soil around the roots with your hands. Water to help remove air pockets around the roots. Repeat to two-thirds full and repeat compaction and watering. Finally, complete filling the hole with soil and then water again. Make sure the trunk flare is partially visible. Do not fertilize at the time of planting.
10. **Mulching:** A 3-4" depth of mulch should be placed around the tree trunk out beyond the hole perimeter. Make sure the mulch does not touch the trunk as it may kill the tree.
11. **Staking:** It is generally recommended that trees not be staked unless they are located in a strong wind area. The root system should develop more quickly if the tree is not staked. If a tree is staked the stakes should be removed after one year.
12. **Watering:** Water regularly the first year, particularly during dry periods.
13. **Animal Deterrents:** Various wire or plastic protectors can be used around the trunk to protect the tree from damage by deer, rabbits, etc. Pieces of Irish Spring soap or Ivory soap can be tied to the tree to discourage deer. Commercially sprays are also available. The sprays must be reapplied after any heavy rains or if washed off by a sprinkler system.

Remember: Gardeners have a saying that the first year a newly planted tree **Sleeps**, the second years it **Creeps**, the third year it **Leaps**.

Happy Planting!