



Andy's Garden

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Planting Guide

Planting is one of the most important practices in determining the success or failure of trees and shrubs. To obtain the most satisfactory performance from plants, attention must be given to the details of this practice. A small investment at the time of planting will pay large dividends later in the life of the plant. Following up with good cultural practices -- including pruning, fertilizing, and watering.

Timing

The usual planting seasons are spring and fall. However, container-grown and most balled and burlapped stock can be planted anytime during the growing season, providing that you follow the proper watering practices and that the plants are properly prepared for transplanting.

Plant hard-to-transplant ornamentals in the spring to assure the longest possible period for the establishment of new roots. These plants include beech, magnolia, rhododendron, azalea, flowering dogwood, Japanese maple, holly, sweetgum, hemlock, and sourwood.

The planting season can be extended by careful handling and the use of foliar sprays to reduce transpiration (water loss). A number of antidesiccant sprays are on the market. They are formulated with either a latex or polyethylene base. Use of these sprays improves transplanting success with some plant types. For example, some shade trees can be moved while in full leaf with a ball or soil, use of antidesiccant, and careful handling.

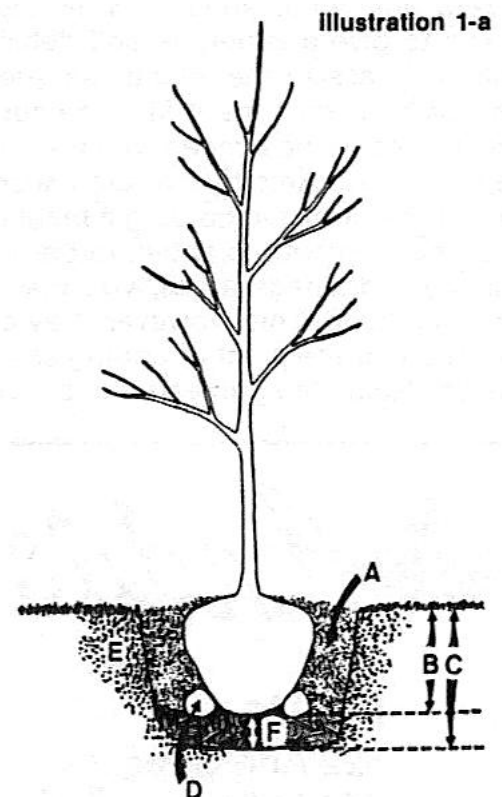
Hole Preparation

General:

The planting hole should be a minimum of 12" larger than the root system of the plant being planted. This type of hole is appropriate for bareroot, balled and burlapped, and containerized plants, as shown in *illustration 1a*. The depth of the hole is quite critical and should be 1-2" shallower than the root ball or root system of the plant.

The soil beneath the plant should be as compacted or more compacted than is the root ball of the plant being planted. If the root ball is denser than the planting media, the plant will settle to the bottom of the hole. This normally would occur during the winter months following planting. When this happens the plant will slowly decline and die. Frequently, plants will languish for five to ten years when this has occurred. The hole should be flat bottomed, as seen in *illustration 1b*, to prevent the plant from being propped crooked in the hole.

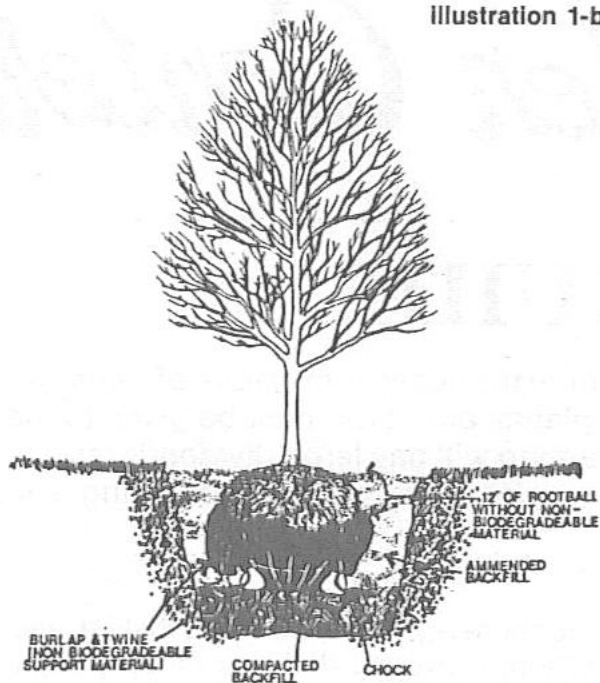
Once the plant is placed into the hole, it should be chocked or propped upright. Orientation of the plant should be checked from two directions 90° apart to make sure the plant is upright.



A- 6" TO 12" SPACE TO WORK AROUND ROOTBALL
B- DEPTH OF ROOTBALL
C- DEPTH OF PLANTING HOLE
D- CHOCK TO STABILIZE PLANT
E- UNDISTURBED SOIL AT NATURAL COMPACTION
F- SOIL COMPACTED TO ROOTBALL DENSITY

Planting Guide ... cont

Illustration 1-b



After the plant is properly oriented, the plant is propped, and any nonbiodegradable material removed from the root ball. Examples of material that should be removed from at least the first foot of the root ball include containers, plastic burlap, plastic twine, wire, or planting baskets. Except for small containers, where the plant can be lifted from the hole easily and the container removed, all nonbiodegradable material should be removed without disturbing the plant. The material should be removed to a depth of 1' below the soil surface and folded into the hole. No attempt should be made to move large plants once the ball support, such as containers or lacing is removed. Folding the material one foot down into the hole will allow the roots to grow over and to reestablish the plant.

Balled & Burlapped:

The critical factor in preparation for the balled and burlapped plants is to ensure that the root ball is 1-2" higher than the depth of the hole (*illustration 2*), and that the plant is resting on undisturbed soil that is compacted at least to the same degree as the rootball itself.

Containerized:

Containerized plants are normally produced in very light weight soil mixes, but even here the root ball should rest on soil that is compacted to a higher degree than is the container mix.

Planting

General:

Holes for balled and burlapped and containerized plants alike should be backfilled with an amended mix consisting of two parts soil from the site and one part organic matter. The organic matter can be from any one of a number of sources, such as composted leaves, hardwood bark, pine bark, peat moss, or similar types of material. The soil amendment should not be uniformly mixed, but rather should be marbled or incompletely mixed to give a variety of soil densities in the backfill. This will assist the plant as they move from the transplanted root mass into the surrounding soil. The backfill should be tamped with the foot or by puddling to remove air pockets that would cause settling later. The backfill will assist in holding a plant up with the proper orientation. Do not attempt to stake plants upright after the plants are planted; rather manipulate root mass and re-compact backfill.

In poor drainage areas, you may wish to plant considerably higher than the 1-2" higher generally recommended. This, however may or may not be sufficient to save plants in poor drainage areas. Adding gravel under the plant or adding sand in the planting mixture *will not* assist the plant to establish. Indeed, this can actually aggravate the problem.

