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Planting Guide Balled & Burlap Trees

Dig a broad shallow planting hole. Enlarge the hole up to twice the diameter of the root ball. Existing soils beneath many planting sites have been compacted and are unsuitable for healthy root growth. The fresh loose soil from replanting provides the new emerging roots room to grow and expand. This will stimulate quick healthy regeneration.

Identify the trunk flare. This is where the roots spread at the base of the tree. This point should be partially visible after the tree has been planted. If the flare is not visible, you have to remove some soil from the top of the rootball. Find it to determine the proper depth of the hole.

Place the tree at the proper depth. Before placing the tree in the hole, measure the depth of the root ball. The majority of the roots develop in the top 12" of the soil. If the tree is too deep, new roots will have difficulty due to lack of oxygen. It is better to plant the tree a little high with trunk flare 1" to 3" above grade than to plant too deep.

Straighten the tree in the hole. Before you begin to backfill, view the tree from several directions to confirm the tree is straight. Once you backfill the hole with soil, it is difficult to reposition the tree.

Fill the hole gently but firmly. Fill the hole about 1/3 full and tamp the original soil around the base of the root ball. If the tree is balled and burlapped, cut and remove the string and wire from around the trunk and top 1/3 of the rootball. Be careful not to damage the trunk or roots. Fill the balance of the hole by adding several inches of soil at a time and settle with water. Repeat this process until the hole is filled.

Stake the tree if necessary. Generally speaking, it is not required, but some trees with course root systems need additional support for regrowth. Protective staking may be beneficial where lawn mower damage, vandalism, or windy conditions are concerns.

Mulch the base of the tree. Mulch acts as a blanket to hold moisture, protect against harsh soil temperature and reduce competition from grass and weeds. It also protects against lawn mower and weed trimmer damage. A 2" to 4" layer of shredded bark is ideal. Do not heap directly against the trunk. Leave a 1" to 2" wide area mulch-free at the base. This will prevent decay of the living bark at the bottom of the tree.

Watering. It is important to water thoroughly when you water. The root ball will be a minimum depth of 18-24 inches. This is how deep you must soak your plants. Weather will affect watering. If nature provides a soaking rain of 1" or greater, it would replace watering. Periods of hot dry weather will require additional moisture while the opposite is true during wet periods.