

Tree & Shrub Planting and Care Guidelines

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Basics of Planting and Care

Planting trees and shrubs is easy, *taking care of them requires commitment.*

1. Call 811 before you dig! This is a free utilities location service.
2. Trees should be covered when transported unless dormant.
3. Choose a planting site that meets the growing requirements of your desired plant.
4. Grass is the mortal enemy of your plant; mulch is its best friend.
5. Water your plant in times of dryness.
6. Learn the steps to prune a young tree/shrub. This is vital for longevity!
7. Ask an arborist. If you have concerns or questions about your trees and shrubs, call an arborist for a consultation. Also, feel free to consult the staff of New Harmony Native Trees & Shrubs with questions regarding your tree or shrub. We are here to help ensure the long life of your new plant!

Planting Site Selection

Choose the best site for a given species of plant. For example, do not plant a large species in an area with limited room for root growth, underneath powerlines, or near a sidewalk.

Consider the following:

- Mature size of the plant
- Light requirements of the plant
- Extent of root growth
- Moisture

- Soil conditions (e.g. pH and compaction)
- Overhead hazards (e.g. power lines and roofs)
- Underground hazards (811 will mark many, but some private utilities may need to be marked separately)
- Deer and rabbit presence
- Proximity to roads and agricultural fields

Planting Instruction for Trees/Shrubs Grown in Tubes at New Harmony Native Trees & Shrubs

1. Remove all the grass and weeds within a 2-foot diameter circle. This may involve removing 3 to 4 inches of sod. Dig a cylindrical hole in the center of the circle using a post-hole digger or power auger. The depth of the hole should be an inch less than the length of the soil cylinder in the tube (not the length of the plastic tube). The hole should be 8 inches in diameter when planting a tree in a 6-inch diameter tube and 12 inches when planting a tree in an 8-inch diameter tube. It is best to err in digging the hole too shallow, as the plant will settle. The sides of the hole should not be glazed (hard and smooth). Remove glazed surfaces by clawing the sides of the hole with a tool.
2. Finely divide the soil that was removed from the hole with a spade. Remove any grass or weed roots from the soil. Soil amendment at time of planting is generally not required.
3. Wearing gloves, unfasten the staples at the top and bottom of the tube (caution: the staples are sharp). Unlace the cable tie from the bottom 2 or 3 holes that are drilled in the plastic tube.
4. Examine the vertical growth of the plant as it may lean. Slide the tube into the hole such that any lean of the plant is directed into the prevailing wind. Orient the soil cylinder such that the lower stem of the plant is as vertical as possible and perpendicular with the earth; this may require tilting the soil cylinder in the hole. Remove the cable tie from the rest of the holes drilled in the plastic tube, then pull the sheet of plastic from the hole, while holding the plant in the proper position. (The plastic sheet can be reused and may be returned to our nursery.)
5. Fill the space between the sides of the hole and the soil cylinder with the finely divided soil that was previously set aside. Water the soil that was added to the hole; this will settle it. Add more soil to the hole until it no longer settles when watered. Some clean makeup dirt may be required. At this point, the trunk flare (the base of the plant where the roots emanate) should be just below the soil surface (<0.5 inches). *Do not* bury the plant's trunk above the trunk flare. This could result in premature death of the plant.

6. Spread mulch around the plant to 3 to 4 inches in depth. The mulch should be at least 2 inches from the trunk of the tree and should never touch the trunk. If mulch touches the trunk, it will promote bark rot during periods of high moisture, resulting in premature death. Ideally the mulch should extend to the dripline of the plant. Wood chips and leaf matter work well as mulch. Weed barriers, synthetic ground covers, and rock are not recommended. Bagged, dyed mulch is heavily discouraged, as it is a vector for invasive species. Upon request, our nursery can provide wood chips.

Care After Planting

1. It may be less concerning for a multi-stemmed shrub, but if the lean of your tree is substantial after planting, then staking may be warranted. Use a material to hold the tree to the stake that does not damage the bark, such as old hose, nylon straps, or strips cut from old clothing. Generally, any stake can be removed 1 to 3 growing seasons after planting.
2. In areas where deer and rabbits are issues, it is recommended to place a protective wire cage or guard around the tree. A cage can be crafted from wire fencing and should be at least 5 feet high.
3. Keep the area surrounding the plant mulched. Grass robs the plants of micronutrients and water. Additionally, non-native turf grasses produce chemical substances which slow the fine root growth of your plants. Benefits of mulching include suppression/elimination of grass/weeds around the plant and protection against weed whackers and lawnmowers. Control weeds/grass with mechanical removal or careful application of Glyphosate.
4. Water trees/shrubs with a 5-gallon bucket or equivalent amount once per week in times of dryness. They do best when watered deeply and then allowed to dry out for a week. Roots can rot if over-watered.
5. Learn how to properly prune a tree or shrub. Do not prune a tree for the first two years, other than to remove a co-leader or damaged stems. Never top a tree or stub-cut branches.
6. Inspect the plant frequently for harmful insects, fungus, and signs of stress and contact us with any concerns.

Suggested Resources

Plant Databases

Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Center - <https://www.wildflower.org/plants/>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Plant Database - <https://plants.usda.gov/>

Illinois Wildflowers - <https://www.illinoiswildflowers.info/>

Continued Reading

Planting Native to Attract Birds to Your Yard by Sharon Sorenson

Midwestern Native Shrubs and Trees by Charlotte Adelman & Bernard L. Schwartz

Nature's Best Hope by Douglas Tallamy

The Nature of Oaks by Douglas Tallamy

Google 'Purdue tree pruning' and learn the basics of pruning techniques.