

Tree Planting

The optimal time to plant is during dormancy (January and February.) If you wish to plant another time of the year, please plant container grown trees in the fall. Because of our mild climate, plants will continue root growth through our cold months. Planting perennials in the fall will encourage the plant to develop a strong root system, which will help the plant through its first summer with less stress.

Steps to planting:

1. Select a tree. Please pick up one of our handouts on tree selection. Many nurseries will deliver trees to your home, make sure you ask their delivery fee; occasionally, there is no charge!
2. Dig the hole. (You might need a pickaxe!) Your hole does not need to be any deeper than the root ball of the tree. It is recommended that you dig the hole 1 to 2 times the size of the root ball. Digging a hole this size will allow the feeder roots to grow out into this area. The feeder roots of trees are generally in the top six to twelve inches of soil from the trunk to two and half times the drip line of the tree. The drip line is the area where the outermost edges of the branches end.
3. Carefully remove the tree from its container. If the tree is large, you may need help. If the tree does not come out of the container easily, you may cut the pot/container off; please be careful. If the tree has been in the container for a long time, you may notice the roots growing in a circular pattern. Gently pull the roots out of the circular pattern.
4. Place the tree in the hole. The root flare (where the trunk starts to flare out at the base) should be above soil level. Some soil of container grown trees may need to be removed to expose this root flare. Backfill with native soil (try to refill the layers in the same order they were previously.) If you place amendments (fertilizer) in the bottom of the hole, it will encourage the roots to stay in that area, sometimes growing circularly. When you feed a tree, place the amendments on top of the soil. Root stimulator is an excellent choice for an immediate amendment. If you feed the first year, do so lightly. In the following years, feed in the spring. A slow release fertilizer is beneficial as is replenishing organic matter with compost. Place the compost on top of the soil, 6" from the trunk to 1 – 2 times the size of the canopy past the drip line one to two inches deep.
5. Place mulch around the tree. The mulch should not touch the trunk of the tree. It should be placed 3" deep around the base of the tree. Depending on the size of the tree, your mulch can range in diameter. One of the best ways to get your tree off to a good start is mulching. Keep those weeds away! Weeds compete for water. Weed growing near the trunk of the tree may also cause weed-eater (line-trimmer) damage on the truck, which can greatly compromise and even kill a tree.
6. Water your tree immediately. Watering sufficiently in the first several years is a key to your tree taking off. Supplemental water should be provided to trees when weekly rainfall does not equal an inch of water. With your new tree, you will have to water for a few years until it becomes established. You may still have to water your tree during drought periods. Watering should be deep, meaning don't

hold the hose over your tree for three minutes. Set the hose down after turning it down and let it run for a while. This will provide the tree with adequate moisture. Remember that this is dependent on the size of your tree...a 5 gallon tree will take significantly less time to water than a 65 gallon tree. Do not over water as this may cause problems as well.

7. Staking. Everyone sees trees in landscapes with stakes on the trees. If your tree is small, it probably does not need staking. What staking provides is stability. If the tree is large, its canopy is probably much heavier than its root ball. The stakes will hold the tree in place when the wind blows. If you decide to put stakes on the tree, protect the trunk from becoming girdled. The main problem with staking is that trees are staked but the stakes are not checked regularly. The wires (even with insulation, a.k.a. garden hose) tend to cut into the bark. The stakes do not need to stay on very long, six months is usually the maximum amount of time needed.

Sources for trees:

Many local nurseries are excellent resources for trees. Make sure that the tree of your choice is native or adapted to our area. For resources on choosing a tree for your yard visit these web sites:

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/plantlist.htm>

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/plantlist.htm>

Some websites to visit for illustrations and more instructions on tree planting:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/extension/newsletters/hortupdate/nov01/art5nov.html>

<http://www.arborday.org/trees/video/howtoplant.html>

<http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/greengarden/plantlist.htm>