

Planting Guide: Balled and Burlapped Plants

1. Measure the root ball across the top, from end to end, and dig a hole at least twice as wide as the root ball.
2. Measure the root ball from top to bottom and subtract 4-6 inches. This is your measurement for the depth of the hole. The plant's root flare (the area where the roots first start to emerge from the base of the plant) should be slightly above ground level. **Do not plant the tree/shrub too deeply.**
3. Add a 1" layer of soil amendment to the bottom of the hole. There are two different soil amendments that we recommend for trees and shrubs: Black Forest Soil Conditioner, and Cotton Burr Compost (you only need one, not both).
4. Place the root ball in the hole.
5. Remove all the burlap, rope, and any other material that may be around the root ball. If there is a wire cage around the root ball, bend the sides halfway down, or cut off the second and/or third segment going around the sides of the root ball.
6. Refill the hole with a mixture of soil amendment and native soil (the soil you dug out of the hole).
7. After the hole has been refilled, tamp the soil around the root ball to make sure the plant is stable and secure. Water the plant immediately after you finish planting.

Fertilizing – Adding fertilizer is **not** necessary when planting a new tree or shrub. We also recommend that you do not fertilize trees and shrubs during the first year after planting. The plant's tender roots need to re-establish before fertilizer is applied. After the first season, you may apply fertilizer as it is needed - some plants in your garden may need it, others may not. We recommend using organic, slow release fertilizers for your trees and shrubs.

Mulching – Adding mulch to your garden beds is both aesthetically and functionally beneficial. Mulch retains moisture around the plant's root zone, protects and insulates the roots, helps prevent the growth of weeds, and makes your landscape look more complete. Mulch is available in many different types of materials, colors, and textures, but they all work equally well. Deciding which type of mulch to use is purely an aesthetic choice. **Do not use rubber, plastic, or synthetic mulch of any kind.** Layer the mulch 1-3 inches thick throughout the garden bed or around the entire root zone of your tree/shrub. **Do not layer mulch directly around the trunk of any tree.** Piling mulch around the trunk may cause the wood to rot and make the tree susceptible to disease and insect infestation. Always leave a 4-6 inch space between the mulch and the trunk of the tree or the base of the shrub. Mulch will naturally break down and decompose, so it may need to be reapplied within 12-18 months.

Watering – Proper watering is essential for newly installed woody plants. Under-watering or over-watering your plants can kill them. New trees and shrubs may need to be on a watering schedule for as long as 2-3 years before they are fully established. During this time, rainfall alone is usually not sufficient. Trees and shrubs absorb all of their water from their root ball for the first 8-10 months after they are planted. This means that plants may still need water even if the soil surrounding the root ball is moist. The best way to water new trees and shrubs is to place a hose at the base of the plant and adjust the pressure until water is slowly leaking from the hose. Leave the hose in place and soak the plant for 20-40 minutes. You will need to adjust the watering time depending on the water drainage in your soil. Supplying a lower volume of water over a longer period of time will fully saturate the root ball and the surrounding soil. Varying weather patterns and site conditions make it impossible to come up with a “formula” for how often you should water your plants. It is best to check the moisture levels in the soil every 2-3 days. Following these routines will help you better understand how often you need to water your new trees and shrubs.