

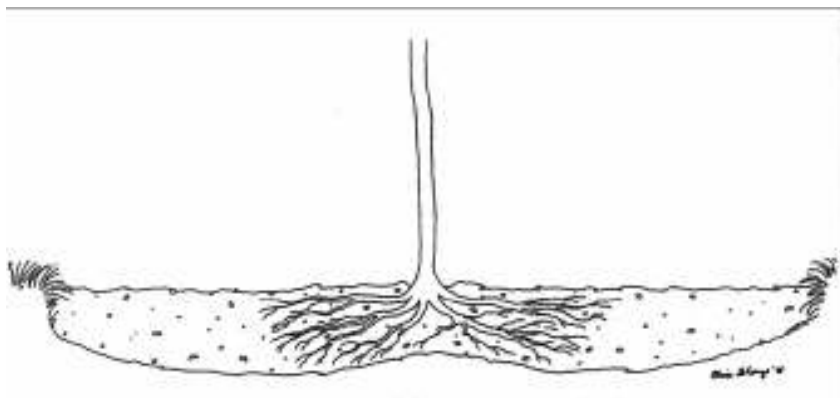
Bare Root Planting Method

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

Planting Day

On the day of planting, bring trees out of storage and lay them down in a central, shady staging area. Keep them out of the sun. Remind volunteers about underground utility considerations, and instruct them on proper planting.

- Carry the tree, with roots still bagged, to the planting site. Lay the tree on its side and remove all string and nursery plastic flags. Leave only the aluminum marking tag and make sure it is attached loosely to prevent girdling.
- Prune only dead or broken branches. At this stage the tree needs all the potential leaves it can get.
- Dig the planting hole wide and shallow. Do not loosen the soil that will be underneath the root system; instead concentrate on creating loose soil horizontally for the spreading roots. The hole should be 2-3 times wider in all directions than the root spread. A hint for loosening soil: use the hole you are digging as a “bowl” to first break up the soil clods, then shovel the loosened soil out.
- Turf surrounding the tree should be completely removed so it doesn’t compete with the newly planted tree for water.
- Remove the tree from the plastic bag and stand it upright in the hole. Plant the tree so that the beginning of the root flare is visible at soil level. It is critical not to plant the tree too deep. Lay your shovel across the hole to see where the shovel meets the root flare and adjust the planting depth.



Dig the planting hole shallow and wide, at least three times the diameter of the tree roots. The beginning of the root flare should be at soil level.

If you anticipate settling of the soil, plant a little high. *It is better to plant too high than too deep.*

- Check to see that the tree is plumb, then backfill with the native soil that you have removed. Do not use amendments in the planting hole. When you've replaced half of the backfill, water the hole to help collapse air pockets. Alternatively, use the opposite, wood end of your shovel to gently poke out air pockets. Finish backfilling, and gently firm soil. Make sure the soil is not mounded against the trunk and that the beginning of the root flare is showing above ground.
 - Mulch over the entire rooting area with 2-4" of wood chips or shredded bark mulch. The farther out you mulch, the better. Don't let mulch mound against the trunk since this could create a favorable environment for fungi.
 - Attach a tree irrigator bag, making sure the tape has been removed from all trickle holes. Fill bags at least once a week during dry spells. Fertilizer is *not* recommended for newly planted trees.
-
- Staking is not necessary and can even be detrimental for most young trees. The exceptions: an extremely windy site, a tree with an unusually small root system, an unusually large sail/canopy relative to a tree's root system, or a tree whose trunk is seriously bowed. A final reason to stake is to protect trees in high traffic areas where vandalism is feared. Young trees are less likely to be victimized when staked.
 - Initial maintenance: Mulch should be maintained at a depth of 2-4". If you employ stakes or guy wires, remove these devices after 1-2 years to prevent girdling of the tree. Start training trees one full year after they are planted.

Text: Michelle Buckstrup and Nina L. Bassuk
Design and layout: Michelle Buckstrup
Illustrations : Olivia DiRenzo