

# NINE STEPS TO SUCCESS: PLANTING YOUR NEW TREE

## 1 UNTIL PLANTING DAY

Store your tree in a shaded, cool place. Water regularly to prevent the roots from drying out.

If you receive your trees in the fall or winter (tree planting season!), they will likely arrive dormant. Never fear—brown or missing leaves don't mean it's dead!

If you gently scratch the bark, a live tree will show a green layer underneath.

## 2 RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE

Select a tree that suits your site's conditions: sunlight, water, and space to grow to its mature size.

Avoid planting too close to power lines, homes, driveways, or other trees.

Before digging, call 811 to locate underground utilities.



## 3 PREP THE SITE

Clear competing vegetation (grass, weeds, etc.) in a 4–6' circle. Loosen the soil throughout the area to encourage outward root growth.

Dig your planting hole in the center, about twice as wide as the root ball.

## 4 FREE THE FLARE

Identify the root flare, where the trunk thickens at the bottom. If you can't see it, gently remove soil until it's fully visible.

Plant with the flare at soil level to avoid stress, decay, or future stability issues.

## 5 PREP THE TREE & ROOTS

Remove any nursery tape, tags, or stakes to prevent future damage or girdling. Lay the containerized tree gently on its side, then slide the container off from the root ball.

With your fingers, gently loosen the compacted sides of the root ball.

If roots are circling or tangled, use a pruning saw or knife to make 4–6 vertical cuts 2–3" deep around the root ball.

If roots are matted on the bottom, slice off that layer (1–2").



## 6 PLANT THE TREE

Depth matters: The root flare should be slightly exposed to sit level with the ground—not buried.

Backfill the rest of the hole with the original soil. Make sure to keep the tree straight as you fill. Use any leftover soil to create a low berm (about 2' from the trunk) to help retain water.

*Optional: Mix in up to 50% compost to improve drainage and nutrient content.*

## 7 MULCH & WATER

After planting, water deeply—both root ball and surrounding soil—to hydrate and eliminate air pockets.

Add mulch for water retention and root protection. Spread 2–3" of mulch in a wide donut shape around the tree, extending about 2' from the trunk.

Keep mulch 2" away from the root flare to prevent rot.

## 8 STAKE AS NEEDED

If your tree is taller than 4', you may tie the trunk to a sturdy stake about 6" from the tree.

The tie ought to be loose, as trees need to sway to develop strong trunks. Check every 3 months to ensure ties aren't too tight and prevent girdling.

## 9 WATER WELL

Soak thoroughly every 3–4 days for the first year.

In the second year, water during dry spells.

Wilting leaves? Your tree could just be thirsty!

STAKE  
(AS NEEDED)

MULCH  
DONUT

ROOT  
FLARE

