



City of Lake Oswego Tree Planting Guidelines

The ideal time to plant a tree is when it is in a dormant condition, either in the fall, after leaf drop, or in early spring before bud-break. Weather conditions at these times are generally cool, and allow plants to establish new roots prior to having to endure the hot, dry conditions of summer.

Call 811 for utility location services at least 2 days prior to digging.

- Identify the trunk flare:

The flare is the part of the trunk where the roots spread out at the base of the tree. If the trunk flare is not visible remove some soil from the top of the root ball to locate. This is critical in determining how deep the hole should be for proper planting, as it should be visible after planting (see diagram).

- Dig a shallow, broad planting hole:

Make the hole only as deep as the root ball and as wide as reasonably possible. You should have a minimum of 12 inches of loosened soil on all sides of the root ball, as new roots will expand more quickly into loose soil.

- Remove the burlap from root ball:

Remove the pot or container from around the soil ball. If planting a balled and burlaped tree, cut the string and pull the burlap away from the trunk prior to placing the tree into the hole. The burlap will decompose in the soil, so it can be buried along with the root ball.

- Place the tree at the proper depth:

The majority of the roots on a newly planted tree will develop within the top 12 inches of soil. It is better to plant the tree slightly high (1 - 2 inches above the base of the trunk flare), than to plant it at or below the original growing level. This will allow for some settling. To avoid damage when setting the tree into the hole, always lift the tree by the root ball, never by the trunk.

- Back fill the hole with soil:

After confirming that the tree sits straight, fill the hole about 1/3 full and gently (but firmly) tamp the soil around the base of the root ball. At this time all string and wire should be removed from around the trunk. Fill the remainder of the hole, taking care to pack the soil to eliminate air pockets that could cause roots to dry out.

- Stake the tree (if necessary):

If the tree is firm within the soil ball, and the top is generally in proportion to the size of the root ball, staking may not be necessary. Studies have shown that trees will establish more quickly and develop a stronger trunk and root system if they are not staked at the time of planting. However, protective staking may be required on sites where lawn mower damage, vandalism or windy conditions are concerns. Support staking and ties should be removed after 1 growing season. A wide, flexible tying material should be used so that injury to the trunk is minimized.

- Mulch:

Mulch is simply organic matter applied to the root area of the tree. It serves to hold moisture, moderate soil temperatures, reduce competition from grasses and weeds, and reduces mechanical injury from mowers and string trimmers. A 2 - 4 inch thick layer is ideal. Care should be taken not to bury the trunk of the tree with mulch, as it can cause decay of the bark at the base of the tree.

