

Appendix A

*How to Plant a Tree*¹

PLANTING

Proper planting techniques may mean the difference between a healthy, vigorous tree and one that performs poorly or dies. By observing the following recommendations, you will give your tree the best possible start in life.

Plant the tree high. Dig the hole one or two inches less than the soil level in the container or the depth of the rootball. In other words, plant the tree one to two inches higher than the surrounding soil. Do not worry about a few roots showing on the surface. If you have to dig through hardpan or a restricted layer, refill the hole with the original, loosened soil and let it settle for a week before re-digging the tree's hole. Be sure not to plant the tree too deep. This may lead to less growth or crown rot and eventual death of the tree.

Dig the hole at least two times wider than the container or rootball. For bareroot trees, make the hole wide enough to accommodate the roots without bending them.

Roughen the sides of the hole to make it easier for the roots to penetrate. Check for twisted, circling or kinked roots. Cut and remove roots that wrap around or are broken or discolored.

Refill the hole with the original soil. If a tree is to mature in the landscape, it will have to grow in the existing soil. Soil amendments like peat moss, compost, rice hulls or fir bark are not necessary. Keep the top of the rootball free of soil.

Water the tree thoroughly after planting to settle the soil around the roots.

¹ Contact the Sacramento Tree Foundation for more extensive tree planting information and diagrams.



STAKING

Not all trees require staking. In fact, improper staking may seriously weaken, deform or injure a tree. An unstaked tree with its top moving in the wind will develop a better root system, have greater trunk taper and thickness and have less wind resistance than a properly staked tree. In some cases, a young spindly tree may require staking for a short time to hold it upright until a stronger trunk develops. *Always remove the nursery stake.* A tree tied to only one stake is subject to trunk and branch wounds, produces a smaller root system and blows over more readily when the stake is finally removed. If you need to stake a tree, do it correctly.

When staking, use two stakes, one on either side of the rootball, approximately 18 inches from the trunk. Pound the stakes in deep enough so they do not move in the wind. To find the tie placement, move your hands up the tree trunk until the tree just remains upright – place the ties here. Use two broad ties of flexible material. Using a handsaw, cut the stakes two to three inches above the ties. Leaving the stakes too tall causes the tree injury when the wind rubs it against the stakes. *Remove the stakes as soon as the tree will stand on its own.*¹ Most trees need not be staked longer than one year.

WATERING

Newly planted trees require regular, deep watering. Construct a basin slightly larger than the rootball around the tree. Fill the basin once a week during hot weather and less often if it is cool or it rains. (Do not over water. Make sure the soil is dry one foot down before watering.) In winter or during rainy times break a hole in the side of the basin, or remove it entirely, so water does not stand around the tree.

After the first six weeks or so, roots will have grown into the soil surrounding the planting hole. The tree will require less frequent watering.

¹ See "Remind neighbors to remove tree stakes: Activity 26"