

# How to plant a tree

## Guideline brought to you by the City Beautiful Commission

For many homeowners planting a tree may seem like a fairly simple task. The City Beautiful Commission would like to provide some tips on getting the best results for your efforts.

1. **Location!** As in all things location is paramount.
  - a. Make sure you pick the right tree for the location you choose. Factor in how large the tree will grow. A tree planted 10 feet away from your house may look perfectly fine today, but if it grows to a full mature height of 50 or more feet with a trunk diameter of 3 or 4 feet, it will be way too close to your home down the road. Similarly a tree planted too close to an existing tree may receive too much shade and never reach its full potential.
  - b. Next look up to make sure there are no overhead utility lines present. Remember trees grow up and you don't want the tree canopy to interfere with your electric, phone or cable service one day.
  - c. Similarly have all underground utilities located so you don't interfere with them. (See d. below).
  - d. Stake or paint out the planned location for your new tree and call Ohio Utility Protection Services (OUPS) to have utility companies come out to mark buried utility lines – gas, electric, water, etc. The phone number is 811 or their website is [www.oups.org](http://www.oups.org). It's a free service and it's the law to call. Allow 48 hours for this locate work to occur. Once you receive utility information you can either proceed with planting or adjust the location due to utility conflicts.
  
2. **Materials:** Once you decide on where to plant your new tree choose a tree appropriate for the location.
  - a. Shop around and look for a first quality tree.
  - b. If you aren't sure about the soil in your yard consider having a soil test done to help insure you have soil that will sustain the tree you plant. For instance oak trees are sensitive to pH levels.
  - c. Check for damaged or broken branches on the tree you select.
  - d. Avoid a broken root ball or a loose - at the top around tree trunk – root ball. Bag and burlap plants should be balled with firm natural balls - firmly wrapped with burlap and contained with a wire basket.
  - e. Protect the tree's canopy from wind damage as you drive it home.
  - f. Granular fertilizer should be added to the backfill at a rate of 3 pounds per tree. The fertilizer should consist of a 14.14.14 analysis: 100% slow release with micronutrients consisting of (19.4% Sulfur, .45% Iron, .45% Manganese, 1% chlorine). This can be purchased at most garden and home improvement centers.
  - g. Mulch placed around your newly planted tree should be hardwood bark aged a minimum of one year, consistent in size, with no foreign materials such as clay, stones, or trash present.
  
3. **It's time to plant:**
  - a. Sod and any remaining stump or roots should be removed from the planting area.
  - b. All planting pits should be a minimum of 60 inches in diameter or twice the size of the root ball whichever is greater. The sides of the pit shall be vertical and broken up so as not to be glazed. All rock and debris larger than 1 inch shall be removed from the pit.

- c. Fertilizer should be *added to the backfill* at a rate of 3 lbs. per tree.
- d. Plants should be set at a depth such that the root flare is visible and 1 to 2 inches above the existing soil grade.
- e. With clean, sharp pruning tools, prune off any secondary/adventitious, girdling, and potential girdling roots.
- f. Wire baskets, burlap, and roping should be removed from the root ball prior to back filling. Special handling is required once the basket is removed.
- g. The trees should be set plum and centered in the planting area.
- h. Place backfill material carefully and in layers working your way around the root ball.
- i. The planting area should be 60 inches in diameter. The bed edges should be approximately 3 inches deep and 'V' cut.
- j. To facilitate watering, form a shallow saucer approximately 4 inches deep around the outside edge of the root ball or soil mass.
- k. Mulch the entire planting surface with shredded hardwood bark mulch applied no less than two inches (2") deep and no more than three inches (3") deep. Leave three inches (3") adjacent to the tree trunk free of mulch. Mulch should be aged a minimum of one year, free of rock, clay, trash, or any items considered toxic to plants

#### 4. Taking care of your new tree:

- a. It is recommended that your new tree is watered regularly for the first 2 years.
- b. The mulch bed around the tree should be maintained - the bed edged annually and NO MORE THAN two inches of mulch placed in the bed taking care to keep the mulch at least 3 inches away from the trunk. Avoid the 'volcano' mulch look as too much mulch on the tree trunk will suffocate the tree. Also avoid running through the mulch bed with your mower as the tires will compact the mulch and soil thereby suffocating the root system.
- c. Fertilizer appropriate for your tree can be applied per manufacture's guidelines.

### Sit back and enjoy your tree!

