

Tree Planting Guide for Homeowners

(This publication is meant for homeowners planting trees on their own property.)

Tree Planting;

1. **Before digging:** call 1-800-432-4770 for a free underground utility check. Accidentally cutting an underground utility is costly and potentially dangerous. Also check to see where your septic system is if you have one. Avoid planting near it.
2. **Location:** To cool your house, choose to plant trees to shade the eastern, southern, and western exposed walls of your house. Small trees can be planted 10' – 16' from the house. Large trees can be planted 16' – 22' from the house.
3. **Look up:**
Don't plant under utility lines unless the mature size of your plant will be shorter than the height of the line.
4. **Digging holes:** The planting hole is no deeper and at least 1.5 times wider than the plant root ball.
5. **Planting:** *Please see Figure 1-3*
 - Never handle the plant by the trunk. Carry it by the pot.
 - After removing the pot, gently loosen roots and cut circling roots. If pot-bound, make several 1-2 inch deep slices down the sides of the root ball.
 - Position the plant in the hole and the top of the root ball is about 2" higher than the soil surface.
 - Fill the hole with soil that was removed to make the planting hole. When the hole is half full of soil, saturate with water to remove air pockets, then fill the hole until it's even with the ground level.
 - Build a 3" high circular berm around the outer edge of the planting hole.
6. **Watering:** Water deeply and thoroughly
7. **Mulch:** Use organic mulch such as eucalyptus, enviro-mulch (melaleuca), or pine bark, two to three inches deep over the edge of the root ball. Keep the mulch at least 2 inches away from the trunk. *Please see Figure 2*
8. **Tree staking:** Stake the tree only if needed. If it is top heavy, unstable, or in a windy location, stake the tree. Remove the stakes 1 year after planting. *Please see Figure 4*

Tree Maintenance;

9. **Watering schedule:** For well-drained soils after planting;
 - **Week 1:** water the root ball every day for the two weeks by filling the planting basin
 - **Weeks 2-8:** fill the basin every 2 days
 - **Weeks 9:** once a week
 - For large trees continue to water once per week for 1 – 2 years.
 - Less water may be required in winter and No need watering for rainy days.
 - For soils that are not well- drained, water less frequently. Use your best judgment.
 - The root ball should be kept moist but not wet.
10. **Fertilization:** *Please see Figure 7*
 - Broadcast the fertilizer under the drip line of the tree canopy, but not close to the trunk.
 - Six months after planting, apply a light feeding with a balanced, complete slow-release fertilizer.
 - After the first year, fertilize three times per year (spring, summer, and early fall).
 - Palms have special fertilizer requirements.
11. **Pruning:** *Please see Figure 5-6*
 - Don't prune until 1 year after planting unless to remove dead or damaged limbs.
 - Never hat-rack or top trees. It's illegal and harmful to the long-term health of the tree. The tree will also be susceptible to damage from high winds. Instead, thin out the canopy to allow wind to blow through.
 - Trim branches properly (not flush cut).
 - Don't apply tree wound paints.
12. **Never injure the trunk with weed-eaters or lawnmowers**
13. **Don't plant flowering plants that need watering, under trees.**

Figure 1

The planting hole is no deeper and at least 1.5 times wider than the plant root ball.



Figure 2

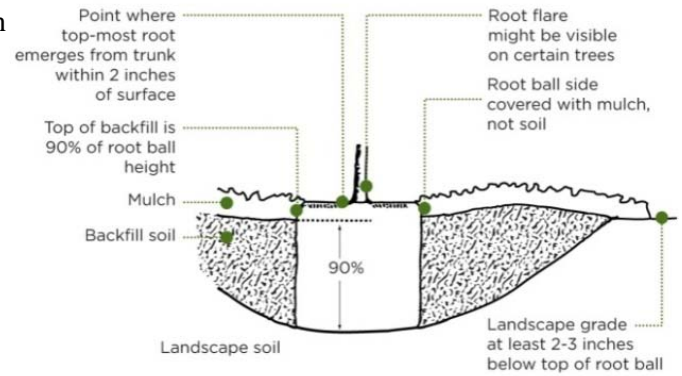


Figure 3



The topmost root emerges within 2 inches of the surface. The topmost root is visible at the surface.



Cut roots that circle the outside of the ball. This will not stress the tree if roots are small or if the tree is not overgrown in its container.

Figure 4

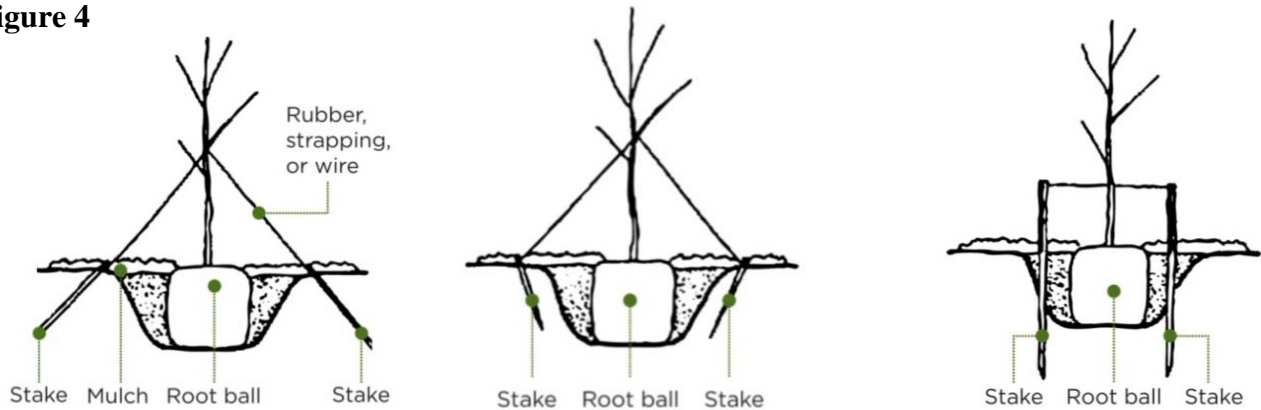


Figure 5

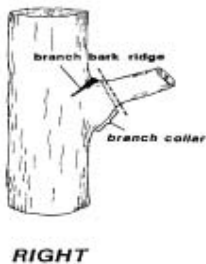


Figure 6

'A' is proper location & angle of pruning cut

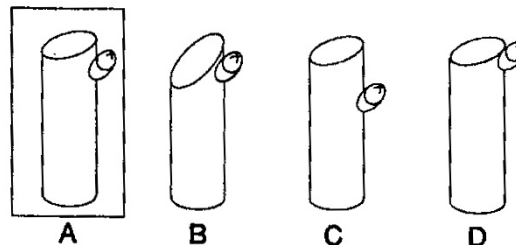
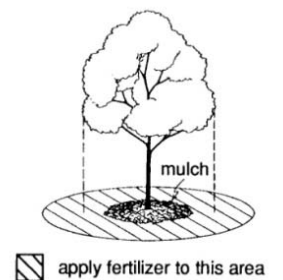


Figure 7



References

- Tree Planting, A Quick Guide for Homeowners
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<http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu/pdfs/fyn/tree-planting.PDF>
- Planting and Establishing Trees
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