

# PLANTING TREES & SHRUBS

## Planting Containerized Plants

- Dig the planting hole at least twice as wide as the root ball to encourage root growth, but no deeper!
- Remove the plant from the plastic container. The plant should slide out with some effort and pots can be returned to Finke gardens for re-use. Occasionally, the pot may need to be cut away from the roots and discarded.
- Use a knife or pruners to cut any circling roots, and lightly rough up the root ball with your hands to encourage the roots to spread out into the soil.
- Place the plant in the hole and make sure the top of the root ball is slightly higher than surrounding soil.
- Back-fill the hole with the soil that was dug out initially. Research has shown that it not advisable to amend the soil.

## Planting Balled and Burlapped Plants

- Dig the planting hole at least twice as wide as the root ball to encourage root growth, but no deeper!
- Gently roll or lower the plant into the hole and make sure the top of the root ball is slightly higher than the surrounding soil.
- Remove as much of the wire basket and burlap as possible. Make sure there is no rope or twine wrapped around the trunk.
- Back-fill the hole with the soil that was dug out initially. Research has shown that it not advisable to amend the soil.

## Mulching

- Applying mulch around your plantings will conserve moisture, moderate soil temperatures, and reduce competition from turf grass.
- Spread a 2 to 3-inch deep layer of shredded wood mulch around the plant. Cover the disturbed soil area with mulch, but keep it a few inches away from the trunk.
- Top-dress the mulch each year to maintain a depth of 2 to 3 inches.

## Staking

- Staking your trees will help secure the tree in windstorms and prevent damage from lawn mowers.
- Drive two wooden stakes on either side of the tree several inches beyond the disturbed soil area. Place a nylon strap around the trunk above a branch union. Use wire to secure the strap to the stake. These materials are available at Finke Gardens. The tree should be allowed to flex in the wind.
- Always remove the stakes, straps, and wires within one year after planting!



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## Watering

- Check your new trees and shrubs two or three times each week (daily in summer's heat).
- Use your finger or a long screwdriver to probe several inches below the soil surface. Moist soil is ideal. If the soil is muddy, do not add any water! If the soil is dry, go get the hose. Experiment with this step until you have a sense of correct soil moisture, or ask a Finke Gardens staff member for examples.
- If a plant needs water, use a hose with a gentle spray nozzle.
- Place the hose at the base of the plant and allow the hose to run at a medium rate until the soil is saturated (1 to 2 minutes for shrubs, up to 30 minutes for trees).
- DO NOT rely on automatic irrigation systems. Coverage is typically uneven and one plant may be drowning while the one next to it may be bone dry.

## Pruning

- Pruning should be avoided the first two years. The plant needs as many leaves as possible to produce energy for root growth. However, it is advisable to remove any branches if they become damaged.
- After the tree has become established, look for crossing or rubbing branches and remove the weaker of the two. Begin removing one or two lower branches each year if clearance is needed for lawn mowers or over sidewalks.
- Make your pruning cuts so the "branch collar" remains intact. Do not make a flush cut, but do not leave a big stub either. If you are unsure about this, ask a Finke Gardens staff member to demonstrate.
- The best time of year to prune is in the winter or in mid-summer. Avoid pruning in spring or fall.

## Fertilizing

- After planting, use a high-phosphorus fertilizer to encourage root growth. No additional fertilizer is necessary the first year.
- Trees and shrubs require little additional fertilizer after they become established. If the surrounding turf grass is fertilized annually, there are probably sufficient nutrients for trees and shrubs. If you have concerns, have your soil tested and apply a fertilizer only if your test recommends it. Too much fertilizer can be as harmful too little.
- Discuss your specific plant nutrition needs with a Finke Gardens staff member for fertilizer recommendations.



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