

## PLANTING TREES and SHRUBS

Thank you for purchasing your new shrub or tree from Bennett's. We wish you the best of success with your planting and have outlined a few simple steps to insure it.

### ASSURING THE CORRECT PLANT SELECTION:

Before deciding on a shrub or tree, a few questions should be asked to make sure the plant you will choose is well suited to its location.

1. What is the mature size of the shrub or tree that you would like to plant – does your site allow for this size? Are there any utilities that will interfere with the plants' growth, i.e. power lines, telephone poles, etc?
2. How much sunlight does the site receive and to what degree? Is it in full sun all day? Morning sun? Afternoon? Dappled?
3. On what side of the house or structure is the planting site located? This can be important because some plants need protection from strong winds and others from afternoon sun.
4. What type of soil makes up the planting site: Sandy? Rocky? Clayey? Some plants require well-drained conditions, while others can thrive in heavy clay.

At Bennett's our sales staff is prepared to help you with these questions. We'll help assure the hardiness and appropriateness of your selections.

### GETTING STARTED:

#### Tools and Materials

Proper tools and planting materials are important. A sharp spade and shovel, a large bucket or watering hose long enough to reach the planting area, a hand trowel, and a knife, pruners, wire cutters etc. to help remove containers and prepare plants – all make installation much easier. Planting materials such as peat moss, mushroom compost, fertilizer, mulch, plastic tree guards, and tree stake kits help insure that plants have a good start.

#### Size of Hole

1. The width / diameter of the hole is easy to determine. The hole should be at least two times the size of the rootball. This allows the roots ample room to grow and establish during the first few years.
2. The depth of the hole is the challenge to determine.
  - a) The first step is to locate the root flare (see fig. 1) i.e., the point where the trunk tapers out and into root tissue. This is critically important for all trees; also shrubs with 3-7 main stems normally have a root flare. All balled and burlapped and even containerized trees need to be checked.
  - b) Locating the root flare can be done by gently probing the rootball with a straightened clothes hanger, sturdy stick or a hand trowel. Insert the probe or your finger into the root ball around the trunk to determine where the root flare is located.
  - c) Oftentimes one to several inches of soil will be covering the flare. All of the soil above the flare will need to be gently removed during the planting process by using your hands or a garden trowel. Do not remove excess soil at this point.
  - d) Balled and burlapped plants are *likely* to have several extra inches of soil, but containerized plants may also have one or two extra inches to be removed.
  - e) Estimate how many inches below the soil surface the root flare is located. The height of the rootball less this many inches determines how deep to dig the hole. *eg: If the original rootball was 20 inches deep and, after probing, you find the root flare to be down 8 inches, then the planting hole needs to be 12 inches deep, as the top 8 inches of soil will need to be removed.*



**Fig.1) The wire on this tree represents the maximum depth at which the tree can be planted**

### PLANTING:

#### Digging and Soil Preparation

Dig the hole the correct size, making sure it is *no deeper* than determined when finding the root flare.

**Special Note:** If planting in soil with heavy clay content, we suggest checking for drainage before digging the entire hole. Fill a small, narrow hole, dug to the correct depth, with water. If it takes more than an hour to drain, you have a drainage problem. If another location with better drainage is not feasible, dig the hole wider than normal and ask Bennett's about other options to solve this lack of drainage.

After completing the hole, score the sides with a spade or shovel and loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole to a depth of 2-4" to aid with root penetration. Remove any sod and discard. Do not put sod in the hole or replace it on top of the planting when done.

Thoroughly mix the soil removed from the hole with an equal amount of sphagnum peat moss or a combination of peat and mushroom compost. This soil mix should be loose and crumbly for proper planting. It will provide good water retention, drainage, aeration, and fertile organic material. This soil and root environment preparation is one of the most important factors that will encourage roots to grow into the surrounding soil, thus helping your plant survive and thrive.

#### Installing the Plant

1. Plastic containers must be removed before planting. Water all plants thoroughly. Invert pots and give a sharp tap. If root ball does not slide out, cut the side of the pot until it can be removed. Cut or invert all plastic bag containers to remove.
2. Plastic containers often cause severe root problems. If the roots are heavily matted and / or wrapping in a circular pattern, loosen them with your fingers or cut the outer circling roots with a sharp knife.
3. Plants in fiber or paper mâché pots should be left in these pots. The upper 1/4 to 1/3 of the pot should be cut away allowing the remaining portion of the pot to hold the root system together. The pot will then break down and soften in the planting hole, allowing easy root penetration. No part of the fiber pot should be exposed after planting.
4. Balled and burlapped plants should be set in the hole in the condition they were purchased (with twine, burlap and wire basket intact), *being careful to handle the plant by the rootball – not the trunk or the stems.*
5. Before removing any soil from the top of the root ball, center the plant in the hole and stabilize it with 4-6" of soil around the bottom of the hole.
6. Next, cut all twine from around the trunk and loosen the burlap from the top 2 or 3 inches of the rootball. Burlap and twine can be folded into the hole or cut off and disposed.
7. If the root ball has a wire basket, cut off the first or second section of wire using a pair of wire cutters or cutting pliers. Remove this excess wire, leaving the bottom of the basket intact helping hold the root ball together.
8. After the plant is placed in the hole, begin to remove the excess soil that is on top of the root flare. Remove enough soil to expose the root flare (see fig. 2)



**Fig.2) The excess soil can usually be removed by hand to expose the root flare.**

**SPECIAL NOTE:** Recent studies have shown that trees and shrubs planted with their root flare below the surface of the soil are less likely to thrive and will oftentimes die - due to a lack of oxygen available to the roots, ailments associated with trunk saturation, and a host of other degenerative diseases.

**Completing the Planting**

1. Using the soil/humus mix, backfill the hole 1/2 TO 2/3's full – enough to finish holding the plant in place. Double check to make sure the plant is centered in the hole.
2. Stand back and check for straightness. Tamp the soil/humus mix around the rootball to firm the soil and solidify the plant in place
3. It is critically important to water trees and shrubs during planting. Water needs to penetrate all around and to the bottom of the rootball. Filling the remaining hole with water at this point insures thorough, deep watering.
4. This is also the stage that fertilization should be done. Use a water-soluble fertilizer, such as Root Stimulator, mixed into the initial water. A slow release form of dry fertilizer, such as planting tablets, can also be used. This fertilizer needs to be placed on the soil in the hole.
5. After the initial water has drained, backfill the rest of the hole and check for straightness again. Do not tamp the soil at this point. Use care not to cover the root flare.
6. With the remaining soil mix, form a small ring or dam around the planting hole. Thoroughly water again until the soil is saturated.
7. In may cases especially with evergreen and large deciduous trees, staking is necessary to hold the tree in place. Usually one year is long enough, but adjust the guide supports to different areas of the trunk every 10-12 months if staked longer.
8. Plastic tree wraps / guards help protect trunks of trees especially during the first summer and winter. We feel the expandable, white, plastic wrap is preferable to other wrappings. It allows the bark to breathe; it reflects sunlight and heat that could crack young, tender bark; and it doesn't have to be removed for at least one year.
9. A one to two inch layer of bark mulch spread over the planting area is a helpful final touch. Be very careful to not mound the bark on the trunk or lower stem of the plant. Keep it pulled back about an inch from the crown. The mulch helps conserve moisture, deter weed growth, protect against zealous mowers, and presents a clean, finished appearance.

We at Bennett's are here everyday to give  
"Helping Hand Hints" personally, one to one.

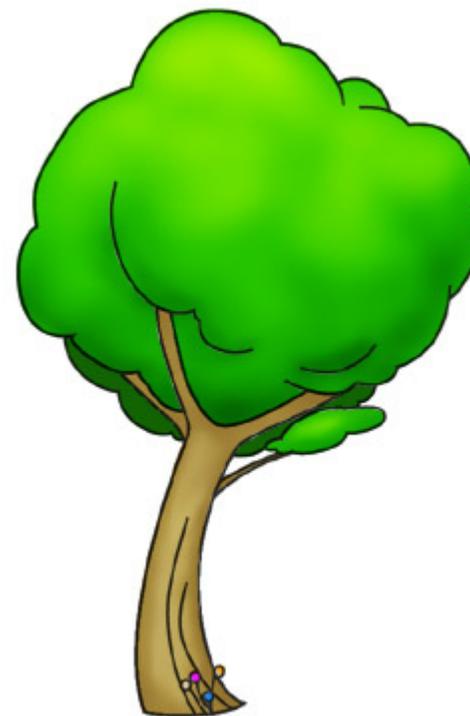
Many gardening problems are very specific,  
and we couldn't possibly cover all aspects in these pamphlets.

Any time you have a specific problem or need help,  
feel free to call. It's our job to help you be successful  
in your growing endeavors, and we thoroughly enjoy  
giving you a "helping hand."

BENNETT'S  
3651 McCarty Lane  
Lafayette, IN 47905  
NURSERY DEPARTMENT  
Phone: 765-447-7636  
[www.bennettsgreenhouse.com](http://www.bennettsgreenhouse.com)



## *Helping Hand Hints*



## *Planting Guide for Trees and Shrubs*