

# Planting a Tree on Arbor Day

## Select a Good Planting Site

Identify the prospective tree planting location and, if it is on city property, find out what municipal department is in charge of planting and caring for city trees. Ask who is responsible for the identified area and what process must be followed to receive permission to plant a tree there.

Concurrently, begin to determine which trees are suitable to your climate, soil conditions, water availability, and size restrictions. Take into consideration overhead wires, room for roots to grow without upsetting sidewalks or streets, and room for the canopy to grow without interfering with traffic or business signage.

## Select the Right Tree

In selecting a tree to plant, the first consideration must be what the tree needs and what the area can provide. There are six "tree needs" to compare with your area conditions:

1. Temperature – Trees have a limit to the cold they can endure. Check hardiness zones before choosing a tree.
2. Moisture – Each species can tolerate wet or dry conditions to a different degree.
3. Light – "Shade tolerance" is the term foresters use to rate the light requirements of each species.
4. Pests – Every locality has problems with a particular insect or disease. Some trees are more susceptible to a certain disease than others.
5. Soil – Soil depth, structure, pH and moisture can make the difference between success and failure with a tree. Each species has its preferences.
6. Air pollutants – Chemicals in the air vary with localities; some trees are more tolerant of air pollution than others.

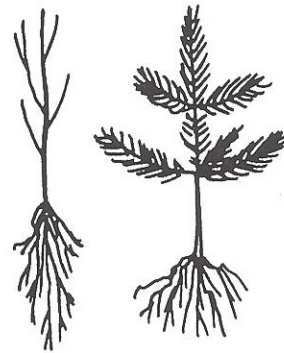
When it is determined if the area and the tree species are compatible, then other factors should be considered. Is the tree being planted to save energy and provide shade? Is it being planted to beautify the grounds? Is providing wildlife habitat important? Will the tree be part of a windbreak or shelterbelt? Determining why a tree is being planted will help identify the ideal species.

Before planting a tree, know how big it will be at maturity – will it have "head space" and root area to grow well? Will roots interfere with the sidewalk, patio, or driveway at maturity? Will it block windows or scenic views or tangle with the utility wires when it is mature? These answers will all help eliminate inappropriate species.

Finally, with the remaining eligible species, choose the tree you want to plant with an eye for its shape, its leaves, and its impact on the area.

After you have chosen a tree that is suitable for the location, get permission to plant from the appropriate city agency. Have your choice approved by your city or state forester. Follow correct planting procedures when planting your tree.

## Look for these physical characteristics in your trees



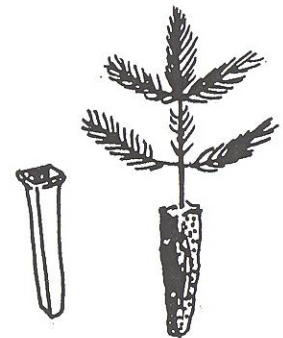
### BARE ROOT SEEDLINGS

- Roots should be moist and fibrous
- Deciduous seedlings up to 10" in height should have roots approximately equal to the stem length; from 12" - 24", look for roots approximately 10" - 12" long.

*NOTE: Bare root trees of large sizes are also available, but at fewer and fewer nurseries. It may be worth locating a source, as this can often save you 30-50 percent of the cost. Careful storage is necessary to prevent drying and planting must be completed before dormancy ends. Success is best with species that continue stem elongation all summer, such as locust, hackberry, and elm.*

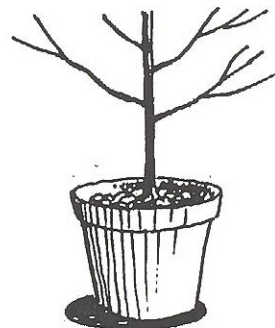
### CONTAINERIZED SEEDLINGS

- The soil plug should be moist and firm.
- Avoid tall, spindly tops. Well-developed roots are more important than height of the seedling.

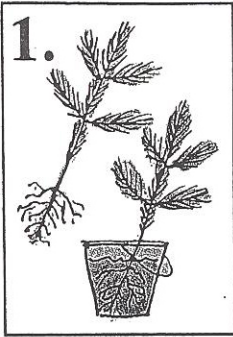


### POTTED TREES

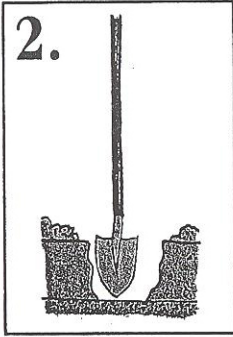
- There should be no large, circling roots. (Check this by feeling down into the top 3" - 4" of the pot).
- Pruned roots should be cut cleanly and no wider than an average finger.
- Soil and roots should be joined tightly.



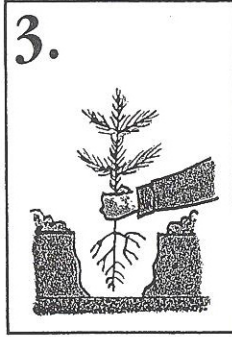
# How to Plant a Bare-root Tree



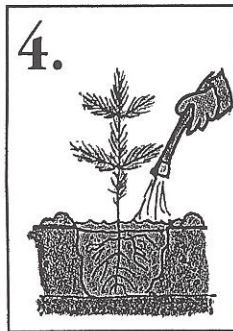
1. Unpack tree and soak in water 3 to 6 hours. Do not plant with packing material attached to roots and do not allow roots to dry out.



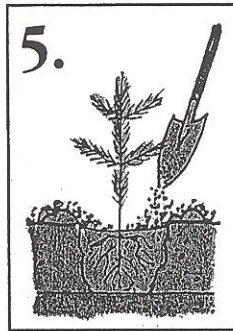
2. Dig a hole, wider than seems necessary, so the roots can spread without crowding. Remove any grass within a 3-foot circular area. To aid root growth, turn soil in an area up to 3 feet in diameter.



3. Plant the tree at the same depth it stood in the nursery, without crowding the roots. Partially fill the hole, firming the soil around the lower roots. Do not add soil amendments.



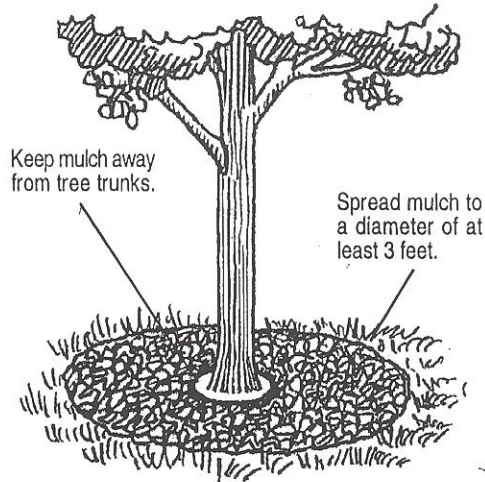
4. Shovel in the remaining soil. It should be firmly, but not tightly packed. Construct a water-holding basin around the tree. Give the tree plenty of water.



5. After the water has soaked in, place a 2-inch deep protective mulch in an area 3 feet in diameter around the base of the tree (but not touching the trunk).



6. During dry weather, water the tree generously every week or 10 days during the first year.



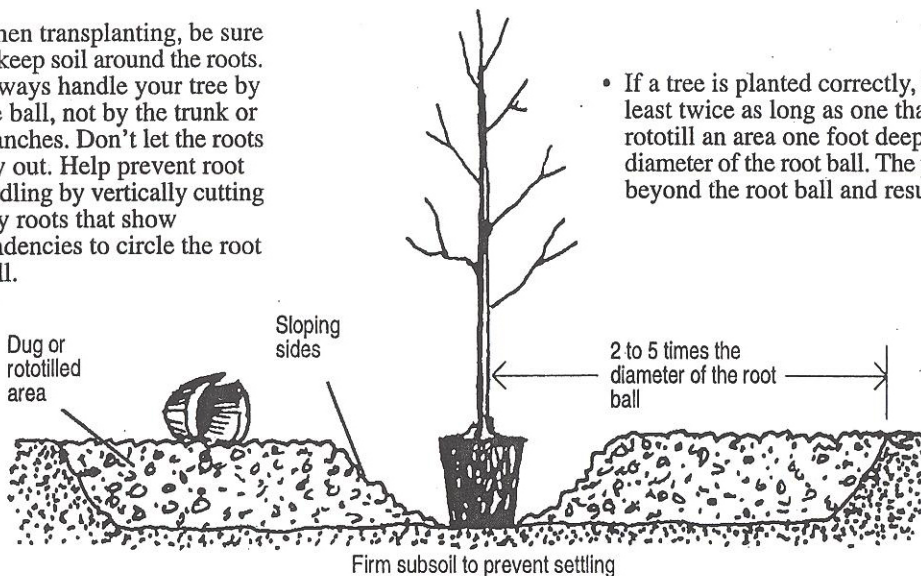
*A properly mulched tree*

## Mulch: A Tree's Best Friend

Mulch is a young tree's best friend. It holds down competing weeds or grass, retains moisture, prevents soil cracking that can damage new roots, protects the trunk from lawnmower damage, and helps prevent soil compaction. Common mulches include bark, wood chips, decorative gravel, and crushed lava. Organic mulches such as wood chips or pine needles also contribute to better soil structure and aeration as they decompose. Avoid limestone rock and allow no mulch to touch the tree's trunk or be piled higher than 3 inches.

# How to Plant a Containerized Tree

- When transplanting, be sure to keep soil around the roots. Always handle your tree by the ball, not by the trunk or branches. Don't let the roots dry out. Help prevent root girdling by vertically cutting any roots that show tendencies to circle the root ball.



- If a tree is planted correctly, it will grow twice as fast and live at least twice as long as one that is incorrectly planted. Ideally, dig or rototill an area one foot deep and approximately five times the diameter of the root ball. The prepared soil will encourage root growth beyond the root ball and result in a healthier tree.

- After placing the tree, pack soil firmly, but not tightly, around the root ball. Water the soil and place a protective 3-foot circle of mulch around the tree.