

TREE PLANTING GUIDE

Trees make Port Hope beautiful and provide us with many obvious benefits - shade, privacy, increased property values, as well as habitat and food for birds and other small creatures.

Besides these obvious benefits, trees also contribute to the health of our Municipality. They clean the air by giving off oxygen, storing carbon, and recycling moisture into the atmosphere. Trees help prevent soil erosion, help modify temperatures, and act as windbreaks.

Planting trees is not only a nice thing to do - it's one way each of us can help improve the environment. Tree planting is not difficult if you remember to follow these simple steps.

Plan Ahead

A tree's biological needs, its shape and size at maturity, and its function in your landscape help determine the best tree to plant in a particular location. Select trees that grow well in your local climate and soil. Each species has a different tolerance to temperature, soil moisture, wind, light levels, and to soil conditions.

Think about what the trees will look like at maturity. How tall will they grow? What shape will they be? Are coniferous (evergreen) or deciduous species preferable? Be conscious of scale; very large trees or shrubs can be overpowering on a small property. Trees should enhance the look of a building and not overshadow it or block windows. Do not plant tall trees close to overhead utility lines.

When to Plant

Deciduous trees can be planted in the spring, as soon as the frost is out of the ground or in the fall, from leaf-fall until freeze-up. Most trees tend to overwinter better if planted in the spring.

Evergreens can be planted early in the spring until four weeks after deciduous trees have opened their leaves or in the fall, from about the first week of August to the end of October.

Planting Steps

1. Minimize stress to your trees

Protect your tree well during transport to avoid bruising the bark and breaking twigs, branches, and buds.

Pad the tree trunk and branches with burlap and tie all loose ends with soft rope or twine.

Keep the root ball moist and cover exposed bare roots with wet burlap.

Keep the tree in a cool shady location until it is time to plant.

2. Prepare the planting spot

Remove grass, weeds and ground cover (turf) within 50 centimetres of the planting hole. These plants compete with the tree for water and nutrients.

Dig a square hole at least twice as wide as the container or root ball (to accommodate the entire root system), and to the depth of the root ball.

Roughen the sides and bottom of the hole to allow root penetration.

Gently fill the hole with the same soil that came out of the hole. Do not add soil

amendments.

Soil in the hole should be moist, not too wet or too dry.

A cone-shaped mound of soil at the bottom of the hole is advised for bare-root trees. This will allow the roots to develop downward and outward into the surrounding soil.

3. Prepare your trees for root growth

Bare-root: Loosen the roots with a spray of water and straighten them to prevent doubling-under, crowding, and crossing. Do not expose the roots to direct sunlight or drying winds.

Container: Trees should be kept in the container until the last possible moment before planting.

Burlapped: Trees wrapped in burlap should not be soaked prior to planting. There is no need to remove the burlap; just loosen it and it will soon rot away. Roots circling the outside of the root ball should be clipped, and roots matted on the bottom should be cut off.

4. Plant your tree with care

Bare-root: The root crown is set on the mound and the roots spread over and down the sides of the mound. Refill the hole with good quality soil, gently raising and lowering the tree while filling to eliminate air pockets.

Burlapped / Container: Plant the tree so that the top of the root ball is flush with the top of the hole. Fill the hole in and around the root ball with soil removed from the hole. Tamp the soil around the root ball until the hole is two-thirds full. Fill

the remaining space with water to settle the soil. Allow the hole to drain. Finish filling the hole with soil and make a ridge of soil around the edge of the hole to direct water towards the roots. If soil settles after a few days of watering, additional soil may be required to refill the planting hole.

Taking Care of Your Trees

Watering: A newly planted tree requires about 25 litres of water for every 2.5 centimetres of trunk diameter per week. The roots must not be allowed to dry out. During the second year, water twice a month during the late spring and summer. If your soil contains a lot of clay and water tends to puddle around the tree, lighter watering is recommended to prevent flooding and to ensure that the roots receive enough oxygen to permit growth. Additional watering of evergreens, prior to freeze-up will minimize the detrimental effects of winter drying.

Fertilizing: Fertilizer helps trees thrive and resist drought, disease, and insects, however, newly planted trees should not be fertilized during the first growing season. Later on, high phosphorus fertilizers are recommended to promote root growth and higher nitrogen fertilizers can be applied for greening and top growth. Slow-acting fertilizer can be applied anytime, but mineral uptake is greatest from May through July.

Staking: Stake the tree only if necessary. If staked, make sure that the stake ties do not cause damage to the bark. The stakes should be removed at the end of the second growing season.

Mulching: Mulch around the tree out to the edge of the excavated area, 7.5 centimetres deep, and up to but not touching the trunk. Wood chips, pine bark and leaf litter make fine mulches. Mulching keeps soil temperature fairly steady, retains soil moisture and keeps weeds at bay.

Pruning: Prune the tree sparingly and only if necessary. Remove only dead, broken and diseased branches and roots that are crushed and girdling, or growing around the main stem. Removing even a small portion of healthy canopy actually slows root growth and delays establishment.

These are general guiding principles for tree planting and care. For more specific information, please consult your local tree supplier on proper planting procedures for individual species.



Square tree pit

Portions of this pamphlet were excerpted from the Canadian Forest Service Publication: Green Side Up: A Guide to Tree Planting, 1992, Catalogue ID 3933



Tree Advisory Committee



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