

Proper Planting

Techniques and Guidelines

One of the great joys of landscaping is planting new trees and shrubs. When done properly, hard work and sweat are forgotten and replaced with a feeling of gratification. Unfortunately, a great deal of misinformation abounds concerning the correct planting methods. The following recommendations are based upon many years of experience at Johnson's Nursery, and is echoed by current research in the fields of horticulture and arboriculture.

Considerations Before Planting

First and foremost, proper plant selection is critical. Different plants have different growing requirements. Likewise each growing site offers a specific set of growing conditions such as light requirements, sun exposure, soil types, and moisture. Another important consideration is the strategic placement of plants in your landscape. The mature size of the plant will often dictate the proper location relative to other plants, buildings, utilities, and other obstructions. Proper placement enhances the aesthetic impact of your landscape and will reduce future maintenance considerations.

Our staff is uniquely qualified to offer consultations to ensure the proper plant in the correct location to help you attain your goal of a healthy, beautiful landscape.

Plants are living things—handle with care.

We Plan-You Plant (DIY)

Offering the expertise of our Horticulturists, this custom design service is provided at no cost to you.

This is the best do-it-yourself program if you're a homeowner looking to design and plant your own project. Perhaps you want to add curb appeal to the front foundation? How about a beautiful mixed perennial bed in the empty corner of your yard? This program is designed for people who enjoy do-it-yourself projects and can also be tailored to your capabilities.



Handling Plants

Always pick up plant material by the root ball or by the container, never by the trunk or stems. Also, plan ahead; plant as soon as possible upon receiving your plants. If you are not ready for planting, let us take care of your plant(s) for you at the nursery until you are ready for them.

Plants and their root balls, and the containers they grow in, are heavy; be sure you are physically capable of handling your plant material or have help available to assist you. You do not want to damage your new investment or hurt yourself (particularly your back).

Johnson's Nursery can deliver your plants. Upon request, our crews will set the plants in their desired location, and will even place the plants in your pre-dug hole. More information on digging the planting hole on the next page.

Picking Up Your Plants

If you chose to pick up your plants at the nursery with your vehicle, please come prepared. It is difficult to transport anything in small cars, with the exception of small shrubs or perennials. **Larger trees, evergreens and shrubs demand the use of a pick-up truck (usually without a cap) or trailer.** With a truck or trailer, please bring the following items:

- **Lightweight tarp or bedsheet**
- **Light-weight roping**
- **Small wooden blocks**
- **Wadding (old towel, section of carpet or clothes)**

A lightweight tarp or an old bedsheet helps protect the leaves or swollen buds from being ripped apart or desiccated by winds during transport. Lightweight roping and small wooden blocks are useful in stabilizing the plant load. We do not want the plants to roll around, potentially causing damage to the plants, or causing an accident while on the road. Finally, a section of carpet or an old towel, when placed over the trunk or trailer's end gate, will help prevent scarring of the plant's trunk. We load your plants for you at the nursery. If you come prepared, you will be able to spend less time in our yard, and more time in your own, and your plants should have a safe ride home.



Digging the Planting Hole

Before planting, call Digger's Hotline to locate underground utilities on your property. Do not take chances!

In most cases, we want you to plant your material slightly above (1-3") your existing grade.

DO NOT DIG ANY DEEPER THAN THE PLANT'S ROOT BALL

(This rule does not apply to perennials or groundcovers which should be planted at existing grade.)

Dig a wide hole, twice as wide as the root ball if possible; the wider the better. Why do we recommend a wide and shallow planting hole? Root systems of most plants are relatively shallow, with the majority of a plant's roots in the top foot of the soil. The majority of our soils in the metro-Milwaukee area are poorly drained, compact clay soils, especially on the newly constructed homes or commercial properties. Roots have a difficult time penetrating this soil type. Soil that is loosened by digging and backfilling makes an environment much more conducive to root growth and hence the establishment of the plant. Also, plant roots need oxygen as well as moisture; plants that are planted too deeply will have a very difficult time developing a root system. Planting too deeply could damage the trunk as well. Planting slightly above grade will ensure good drainage and oxygen for the plant's root system.

At the end of this guide, you will find a tree planting infographic and dig hole requirements charts.

Planting and Soil Amendments

Balled and Burlapped Plants

It's time to place the plant in the hole. Check the depth of the hole one last time before setting the plant. Remember, the top of the ball should be 1-4" above the grade of the surrounding soil. Carefully lift the plant by the root ball—or roll it—placing it gently into the hole.

Do not remove any burlap from balled and burlapped plants. Our burlap is biodegradable and helps keep the plant stable; roots readily grow through the burlap. **Likewise, do not remove hemp twine (tan in color)** from around the stems or trunk of your plants. After 3-6 months, you may carefully remove any twine and excess burlap around the base of the plant.

Remove synthetic twine (usually white) used around the trunk or stems, after the tree is in the hole and almost completely planted. **Wire baskets should be left intact.**

With the plant safely in the hole, it is time to backfill. The majority of your backfill should be the actual soil that came out of the hole you dug. Organic matter such as compost, plant starter or peat moss may be added to the backfill; however, it should not exceed 20% of the backfill and should be mixed thoroughly with the existing backfill soil.

Break up and large clods of soil and backfill the hole in layers, gently compressing the backfill. Do not heavily compact the soil as you go. Water can also be used to settle the soil; however, allow water to drain from the hole before adding another layer of soil. Create a small mound (2-4") of soil at the edge of the planting to hold water and facilitate settling. Do not place any soil over the top of the burlap (ball) or likewise over the top of the soil level of a container grown plant.

Plants in Containers

Plastic containers must be removed at planting time. Cut away the container. Look to see if the roots are circling at the bottom of the root mass. If they appear to be pot bound, score the bottom-sides with a sharp tool and spread the bottom of the root mass apart. This encourages roots to spread out as they grow.

Bare root plants in paper pots should be planted with the pot intact, if planted early in the season. Remove any portion of the paper pot that is above ground. If planting later in the season, the pot may be removed.

Plants from both types of containers should also be planted slightly above existing grade, about 1-2". Keep in mind you must gauge the hole size by the depth of the soil mass, not by the depth of the container. Perennials and groundcovers from smaller pots should be planted at grade-level.

Fertilizing

Do not over fertilize at planting time. Allow the plant to reestablish itself before trying to stimulate growth. We typically recommend NutriPak™. This product is pre-measured, slow-release fertilizer that provides fertilization over a three year period.

Staking

Typically, if properly planted, trees do not need to be staked. If you feel staking is necessary, 2" wide polypropylene strapping (or similar material) is preferred. This wide, soft material help minimize any abrasion of the trunk tissue. Plan on removing staking material after about one year if the tree is firm in its planting site.

Watering

Water thoroughly at planting time. Soak the root mass and surrounding soil until saturated. Water gently but completely. Avoid pistol-type nozzles, which blast foliage and soil. Do not water new trees or shrubs daily; this will lead to water logged soils, which is detrimental to the plant. Ask for our brochure on proper watering techniques or watch the videos on our website for more information.

Mulching

Mulching with shredded bark pays big dividends for plant health and establishment. Mulching preserves soil moisture, moderates soil temperature and inhibits weed growth. Bark mulches slowly biodegrade, creating organic matter to enhance the soil for healthy roots.

Mulch new tree and shrub plantings to a depth of 3-4". The larger the area mulched the better. Keep bark mulches away from the trunk, stems and crowns of plants. See the infographic accompanying this brochure or watch the videos on our website for more information.

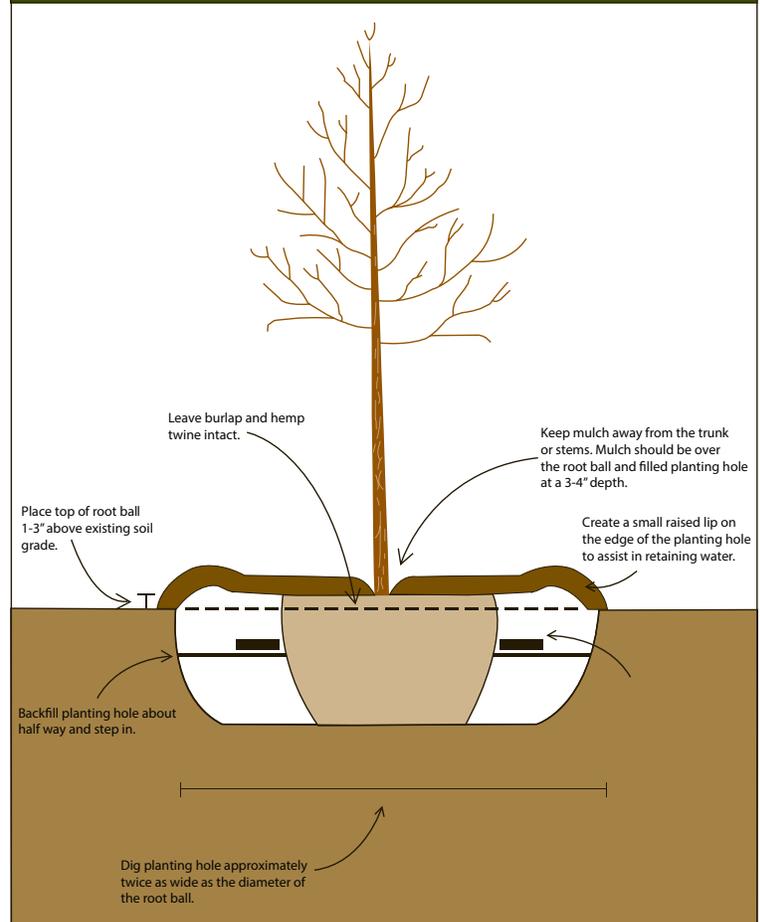
Pruning

The plants in our fields are professionally pruned regularly. When you go to plant your materials, significant pruning is not recommended or necessary. If you deem pruning to be necessary, remove only broken branches, dead branches or major conflicting branches.

Most plants will need some sort of pruning in the future. However, pruning is an art and a science. In addition to training and experience, proper pruning also requires the proper tools and often safety equipment. Please contact us with your pruning related questions, ask for our brochure on proper pruning techniques or watch the videos on our website for more information.

We hope this information proves helpful to you. As always, if you have any questions during the planting process, please call us immediately.

How to Properly Plant Your Trees



Full page diagram available on our website.

Order Bark Mulch Today!

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