



Weaver Plant Nursery

Proper Tree Planting

Correct tree planting should always begin with purchasing a quality adapted tree. Purchase a healthy tree from an independent nursery and an individual that knows which trees do best in your area. Compare the mature size of the tree to the space you have available and be observant of power lines, buildings, driveways, etc. Be sure to cover the foliage of the tree on the trip home. Windburn can occur at any speed and even if you live just a few blocks away.

Before you begin digging the hole, position the tree at the desired location and step back and look. Be sure that the chosen location is really where you want it because it's no fun to move the tree after it's in the ground. Also be certain the chosen location will drain freely and not stand water during rainy times. Again consider the mature size of your new tree relative to the location of buildings, power lines, and other trees.

Begin digging the hole with the tool of your choice. I prefer to have a sharp shooter spade, point shovel, flat shovel, and a grubbing hoe. As you dig, pile the dirt on a tarp so that the lawn won't be messed up with excess dirt. It is helpful to separate any large rocks into a bucket or wheelbarrow. The hole should be dug to the same depth at which the tree is growing in its container—no deeper. Use a tape measure or a mark on the spade to get the depth right. The hole should be dug wide enough to easily accommodate the root ball. I normally dig the hole wide enough to allow room for me to stand in the hole as the tree is set in place. The bottom of the hole should be perfectly flat, not pointed.

The tree's root ball should be gently slid out of the pot. If it does not come out easily, the pot should be cut vertically and then the root ball will slide out. Roots should not be cut unless there are obvious large circling roots that could cause girdling. The tree should be set straight in the hole and the planting depth verified.

The same soil that was dug out of the hole, less large rocks, should be used to refill around the root ball. The soil should be filled in evenly to the top of the root ball, using a little water to settle the dirt as it is filled in. Excess soil can be used to create a small berm about a foot past the edge of the root ball. This berm will create a reservoir that can be filled when watering the new tree.

After the tree is planted and watered well, it should be staked. Smaller trees can use two stakes, while larger trees will need three or four. I recommend using five or six foot steel t-posts driven at equal spacing about two or three feet out from the root ball. A collar made with rope or wire that is covered with old water hose should be *loosely* fastened around the trunk just above the first branches. Do not girdle the trunk with a tight collar. Tension wires should be run from the collar back to the t-posts. All wires should be evenly tensioned so that the tree will be supported in the event of strong wind.

After staking, the ground should be mulched under the tree. The mulch should be hardwood or cedar and 2" to 3" deep over the root ball and surrounding soil. The mulch should be pulled back from touching the tree trunk.

The final step when planting certain trees is the installation of a paper tree wrap on the trunk. The wrap will protect the trunk from sunscald and borers. I recommend that the wrap be used for the first two or three years on thin barked trees such as Shumardii red oak, Chinquapin oak, all maples, and Chinese pistache. It is not necessary on thicker barked trees such as bur oak and live oak.

The newly planted tree should be irrigated immediately and then as required to keep the root ball moist. The reservoir created around the tree should be slowly filled each time you irrigate so that the root ball is watered completely through. Irrigation frequency will be dependent upon temperature, wind, soil type, type and size of tree planted, and other conditions so the tree should be checked often and watered when the top of the soil ball begins to dry out. Don't let the root ball dry out, but don't water if it's already wet just to be watering it.

Following the correct planting procedures will ensure that your new tree will have a good start. Proper planting, along with proper irrigation, are most important to establishing a new tree.

Information contained in this guide is prepared by Dan Weaver, Texas Master Certified Nursery Professional #5338, for areas near Cleburne, Texas. This guide is prepared for informational purposes only and all responsibility of use lies with the user. Always read and obey product labels prior to use of any chemical or fertilizer. Revised June 2023.