

Getting your Chestnut tree off to a good start

By Richard Winkel, updated 27 September 2014

Winkel Chestnut Farm & Nursery

1. Plant as soon as possible
2. Always plant chestnuts into well drained ground. NO standing water through any part of the year. If you can measure and manage soil pH the desired range is 5.5 to 6.5
3. Our trees are grown in RootMaker pots. They have a well developed root system that is balanced with the top of the tree. No need to prune the tree on planting.
4. Do not break up the root ball or otherwise try to manipulate it on planting. Remove the tree from the pot and plant it as is.
5. Plant in an area free of other plants (grass, weeds) for at least three feet around the tree.
6. Chestnuts trees prefer to grow in a well drained soil, only slightly moist and cool. This is best done by mulching the area around the tree and over the root system. Do not mulch right up to the tree trunk.
7. The planting hole should be the depth of the pot with a firm bottom which will not let the tree root system sink deeper into the soil when the soil settles.
8. Create a loose area around the planted tree to let the new roots explore outward. You can do this by digging a wide planting hole and backfilling with the removed earth. Or plant in a slightly oversized hole and work up the soil further out to give the roots an easy path outward.
9. Stake the tree with a 5-6 foot stake. Tie the tree loosely to the stake. Leave this support in place until the tree has developed a firm footing in the ground, and straight trunk to your chosen height (probably 5 feet or more).
10. Fertilize in late winter or spring (March and April). Miracle Gro for acid loving plants is a good blend for young chestnut trees. References noted below will provide additional information regarding fertilizer.
11. Many animals will see these young trees as food. Provide a ring of fence or screen around the trees to keep mice, rabbits, and deer away. Mice will eat bark at ground level and can be kept out with a fine mesh wire cloth. Deer will browse on the tree top and limb ends . This can be prevented with a five foot fence or a tree tube.
12. To create a straight clear trunk, prune off lower side limbs when they become over half the diameter of the main trunk. Leave them in place until then to nourish trunk growth.

References worth your review

The Western Chestnut; Vol 2 No. 2, Spring 2000; article by Dr. Araki:
<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/chestnut/v2n2/v2n2.pdf>

Rogers Reserve, Michigan State University support of the nut industries:
<http://chestnuts.msu.edu/>