



Best Care Tips for Planting Trees & Shrubs

1. Choose the Right Plant

- **Soil Preference:** Many trees and shrubs thrive in sandy, acidic soils, including hollies, oaks, pines, blueberries, and azaleas.
- **Sun vs. Shade:** Match the plant's light requirements to the site conditions. Most flowering shrubs and trees prefer full sun, while shade-tolerant varieties are better for wooded areas.
- **Salt Tolerance:** If planting near roads, driveways, or coastal areas, consider salt-tolerant species like bayberry, red cedar, or inkberry holly

2. Prepare the Soil

Southern New Jersey's sandy soils drain quickly but don't hold nutrients well. To help:

- **Amend the Soil:** Mix **Rich Organic Topsoil** into the planting hole to boost moisture and nutrient retention.
- **Test the pH:** Many plants do well in slightly acidic soil (pH 5.5–6.5), but it's good to test if you're unsure. Lime can be added if soils are too acidic for a specific plant.

3. Dig the Right Hole

- **Width:** Dig the hole **a few to several inches wider** than the root ball. A wider hole encourages roots to grow outward.
- **Depth:** The hole should be **no deeper than the height of the root ball**. Planting too deep suffocates roots.

4. Plant Carefully

- **Positioning:** Place the tree or shrub in the hole so the top of the root ball sits **slightly above ground level** (about 1–2 inches).
- **Backfill:** Use the soil you removed (with rich organic topsoil mixed in) to fill around the root ball. Press lightly to eliminate air pockets but avoid compacting the soil too much.

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- **Mulch:** Apply a **2–3 inch layer of mulch** (like pine bark, shredded hardwood, or pine straw) around the base. Keep mulch **a few inches away** from the trunk to prevent rot.

5. Water Properly

- **Initial Watering:** Water deeply immediately after planting to settle the soil.
- **Ongoing Care:** Water **deeply but infrequently**, especially during the first growing season. Sandy soils drain fast, so in hot, dry weather you may need to water **2–3 times per week**.

6. Staking (if necessary)

- Most trees **do not need to be staked** unless they are in a very windy spot or have a small root ball and heavy top growth.
- If staking, remove the stakes after **one year** to avoid damaging the tree.

7. Fertilizing

- **First Weeks:** Avoid fertilizing right away. Allow the plant to focus on root development. Never add fertilizer directly to the hole during planting.
- **Weeks 3-4 & Onward:** Apply a balanced, slow-release fertilizer formulated for trees and shrubs, such as Plant Tone.

8. Watch for Signs of Stress

Keep an eye out for:

- **Wilting or discolored leaves** (can indicate underwatering or overwatering)
- **Settling** (if the root ball sinks too low, lightly lift and re-mulch)
- **Pests or diseases** (especially in hot, humid summers — early action is key)

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