**Horse Mountain Farm Planting Instructions – Apple trees**

Trees are not difficult to grow, but they do require consistent care to become established in their new environment. Your trees were in good condition when they left our licensed nursery. Once you accept your trees, their growing conditions are beyond our control and become the responsibility of the grower.

**Step 1 –** Inspect your trees and ensure the planting medium is moist. If you need to wait a few days before planting, keep the trees in a cool place out of direct sunlight, such as a garage where they can’t freeze, and keep the roots slightly moist until you’re ready to plant. If you live in the northern US (USDA zones 5-6, wait until your ground thaws before planting.

**Step 2 –** A sunny location with loam soil is ideal for a planting site. Dig a hole 2 times wider and a few inches deeper than the root system. Plant the tree at the same depth it grew in the pot with plenty room for the roots. Slowly fill in the hole with native soil, making sure there are no air pockets around the roots. Create a waterholding basin around the hole by piling a three to six inch high ring of soil around the root zone. Water the tree in thoroughly at planting. Do not fertilize. We do not recommend applying fertilizer or chemicals to newly planted trees. There is no need to amend the soil unless your soil conditions are very poor, in which case you should consult your local extension agent. Once the tree is established, apply a slow-release fertilizer every Spring. Choose a fertilizer high in phosphorus and low in nitrogen for best results.

**Step 3 –** Water your trees.If your trees are still dormant, they need to be kept slightly moist. Once the trees break bud and leaf out, they will need to be watered regularly, at least twice per week throughout the growing season and more ofter during dry spells. The amount of water needed is dependent on your soil, ambient temperature, and rainfall. It is extremely critical that newly tranplanted trees be watered regularly during the first year of growth. It is the most important factor to ensure the successful start of your new trees.

**Step 4 -** Remove any weeds around the planting area. Installing weed mats at planting is helpful in keeping weeds from robbing water and nutrients from your newly planting trees. Mulch, such as leaf litter, hay, shredded or fine bark, and pine needles can also be used for weed control (avoid large bark nuggets which rob nitrogen from the soil). Mulch also helps seal in moisture and enrich the soil.

**Step 5 –** We recommend using t-bar posts to support a 5’ tall cage, 3’ in diamter around your tree to protect it from deer. Deer repellant products can also be used but may be less effective and will need to be reapplied on a regular basis and especially on new growth and after rain. A simple wrap will protect the trunk from rabbit and mice.

**Other Info:** Apple trees will bear fruit better if more than one variety is planted nearby.