

Tree Planting Menu

Introduction: Choose good quality trees for planting. Trees with good [trunk](#) and [branch structure](#) and those with [good root systems](#) perform best after planting. The biggest cause of young tree and shrub failure is [planting too deeply](#). In most instances, the point where the top-most root in the root ball originates from the trunk (*referred to as the root flare or root collar*) should be located at the soil surface. If there is soil over the top-most root in the root ball, scrape it off even if it contains roots. The planting hole should be slightly shallower than and at least twice the width of the root ball, [preferably wider](#). The most important thing you can do to encourage rapid recovery from transplanting is to loosen soil around the planting hole in as large an area as possible. A 10 to 15 foot-wide loosened soil area would not be too big. In all but exceptional circumstances where the soil is very poor, extensive research clearly shows that there is *no need* to incorporate any amendments, fertilizers, living organisms, spores, gels, organic products, etc. into the backfill soil. Simply use the loosened soil that came out of the planting hole. Never place *any* soil over the root ball.

Fertilization: Slow release (*or controlled release*) fertilizer can be applied on top of the root ball and backfill soil or on top of the mulch at planting. There is no need to mix it with the backfill soil or place it at the bottom of the planting hole since most roots end up close to the soil surface in urban and suburban landscapes. Under most circumstances, mulch will not steal the fertilizer from the tree. Adding slow release fertilizer at planting has not been associated with either improved survival nor increased growth after planting, but it will not hurt the plant provided it is applied according to the directions on the product. On the other hand, adding soluble fertilizer to a newly installed plant could burn roots. This will injure the plant and could kill it. Apply according to ANSI A-300 fertilization standards - no more than 6 pounds nitrogen per thousand square feet annually (*many trees can do just fine with less*). Many firms apply it slightly below the soil surface to minimize runoff. Trees receiving regular fertilizer applications may develop fewer dead branches than unfertilized trees. Recent research shows that a greater portion of fertilizer is used by trees when it is applied in the growing season than at other times.

