

How to plant your tree

ON ARRIVAL

Our trees are packed in cardboard, with the roots securely wrapped in plastic to prevent drying and damage in transit. All packages are given additional reinforcement with either canes or branches to protect the trees during transit.

As soon as your trees arrive, please unwrap them to ensure all the trees are there and intact. The trees should be kept in a dry, cool (but frost-free) place until you are ready to plant them. We recommend planting within a week of delivery. If this is not possible, you should either heel the plants in or keep the roots moist in the bag.

PREPARING THE GROUND

Unwrap the tree and get an idea of how big the root is. Most birch have a shallow root system, although some grafted trees need a deeper hole. Alders generally have a deeper root system. **Dig a hole big enough to accommodate the root system with a little extra room around and below it.**

Do not leave the root exposed, but put it back in the bag to protect it from wind or cold (Roots are not designed to withstand cold or drying winds. They do not possess a protective outer bark and their delicate cell structure can easily be damaged).

THE PLANTING MIX

You could just refill the hole with the soil that came out, but trees always suffer slightly from transplanting, so it pays to help them re-establish in the new ground. I like to mix some chunky compost in with the soil to improve the moisture retention and aeration. General purpose compost is ideal, nothing too fine. Make the planting mix about a quarter or half of compost and the rest soil, depending on how good your soil is. Add some fertiliser to the mix. I like to use a controlled release, pelleted fertiliser such as Osmocote or Growmore. Or you could use blood, fish and bone or similar products. Avoid instant-acting fertiliser as there is no point feeding the tree while it is dormant – the fertiliser would simply be leached away before it could be utilised in the spring. Remember you are putting in place the plant food that the tree will seek out in the spring. By adding compost you are helping the soil around the roots to hold moisture. By adding fertiliser you are putting plant food in easy reach of the re-establishing roots.

PLANTING THE TREE

Part-fill the base of the hole with the planting mix. Then place the root in the centre of the hole. Fill around the root system with more of the mix, firming this down with your heel until level with the top of the roots. Make sure the roots are completely covered, but try not to cover any of the lower part of the stem. It should be easy to see the old soil “tide mark” that indicates how far up the stem the tree was previously planted. For grafted trees, you should try to have the grafting wound level with the soil. In very heavy clay soils, it is sometimes a good idea to create a slight mound to plant the tree into. This creates a slightly raised area on which the tree will stand. In this way, you are improving the drainage around the root system. This is not necessary for Alders, which are much better able to cope with boggy conditions.

STAKING THE TREE

Recent research suggests only staking trees for their first year or two, and then only using low stakes. The object of the stake is to hold the root firmly in the ground so that it cannot rock and loosen itself from the surrounding soil. It is not necessary to support the entire length of the stem. Indeed, this can be detrimental to root development. For trees up to 4 foot high, a vertical cane hammered firmly into the ground will suffice. Hold the tree to this by using a good tree tie fixed low down the stem or a tree guard.

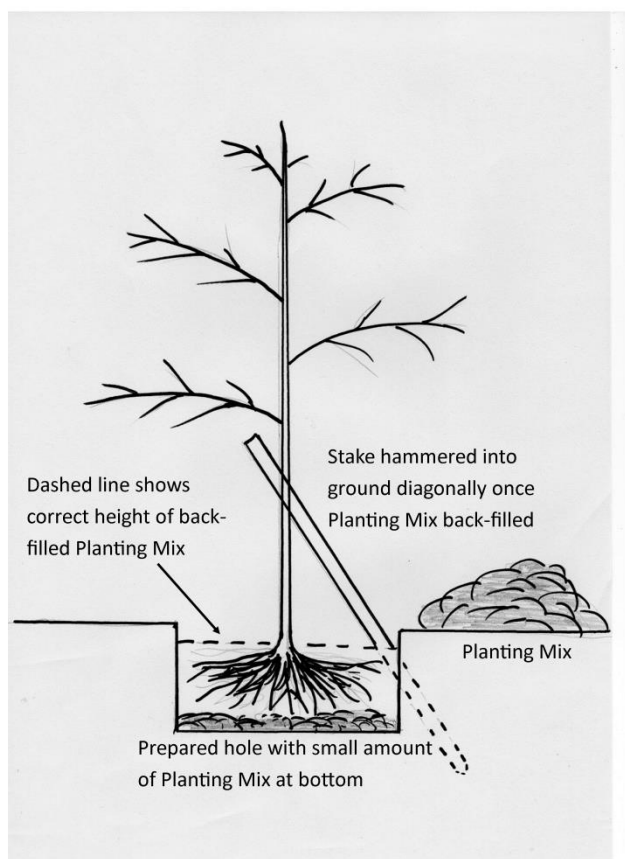
For larger trees up to about 8 feet in height, you will need a tree stake (approx. one inch square timber) hammered diagonally into the ground, with the tree secured to it fairly low down the stem. Putting the stake in diagonally avoids any damage to the root. On sloping ground, the stake should point away from the slope. On flat ground, the stake should point into the prevailing wind. Fix the tree

to this stake using a good quality tree tie with a spacer that will prevent the bark from rubbing on the stake. Trees larger than 8 foot or in particularly exposed areas may need more support. We can advise on all types of tree support on request.

Failure to support the roots of your tree is one of the most common causes of early death of the tree. If the roots are allowed to rock in the ground, they will lose close contact with the soil, their fine hairs will be damaged and the tree will not be able to draw water from the ground.

TREE GUARDS

If Rabbits or Deer are likely to be a problem (and there is nothing tastier than a young tree), then you will need to protect the stem. For protection against rabbits and voles, we use wrap-around spiral tree guards, but you can use the tube or mesh type. If the trees could suffer damage from grazing livestock or deer, then you will either need to fence off the trees or use fairly solid tree guards with the stake positioned vertically. In this instance the stake must be placed in the hole at the time of planting.



LABELLING

It is worth labelling the trees with some form of permanent label. Either for your own benefit or for others should you move. The labels we supply are only meant for immediate identification purposes and the ink will fade fairly rapidly. There are many good brands of label on the market.

Looking after your tree

Buying and planting ornamental trees is a costly and time-consuming business. There is a tendency for people to spend a lot of effort on this, but then ignore the trees once they are in the ground. But it is during their first couple of years following transplanting that they are at their weakest. A lot of preventable tree deaths occur in this period.

STRESS

The first year for a transplanted tree is very difficult. Conditions that mature trees are coping with, may be too much for a newly-transplanted tree. Insufficient water, lack of nutrients, or damage by animals, insects, etc will all put great stress on a tree that is fighting to get its roots down and survive. Obvious signs of stress are wilting or scorched leaves, excessive leaf-drop during the summer, drooping branches, dying twigs or branches and die-back of the top shoots. If your tree shows any of these signs, then you need to act promptly or the tree will suffer and probably die. Stress is not a condition, but a symptom of one of the following problems:-

ROOTS

Regular checking of the base of the tree is essential to ensure the roots have not become loose in the ground. High winds, animal damage or drought can cause disturbance of the roots. Loose, wobbly roots will not be able to draw up water and the tree will die very quickly. If they are loose, push your heel down very firmly all around the root to firm the soil and get rid of any large air pockets. You may then need to add some topsoil.

WATER

Newly transplanted trees need plenty of water. Even during a grey, overcast spell of weather there may not be much actual rainfall, so a good soaking may be required every few days during the growing season, depending on your soil conditions. It may be worthwhile investing in some kind of irrigation system. A Mulch mat or a layer of mulch can be helpful too, as this will slow down evaporation. However, mulch will disguise any looseness of the roots, so be aware of this. Be particularly vigilant during very hot, dry spells.

PESTS AND DISEASES

Young trees are very prone to insect attack because of their soft stems and shoots. Aphids can be a serious menace as can caterpillars, destroying the leaves and limiting the tree's ability to produce food and energy. Regular checks will highlight any infestations, which should immediately be dealt with. Vine weevil larvae can eat the roots, causing sudden death of the tree – this is more likely to be a problem if the tree is kept in a container. Fungal moulds can lead to dieback of leaves and stems. Always make regular checks on the condition of the bark and leaves, and look out for any discolouration or mould.

If in doubt, contact us!

We pride ourselves in growing trees of good quality. But even apparently healthy trees can fail or under-perform. If you need help with a problem or are in any way concerned for the health of your trees, please get in touch with us. We will probably be able to help with advice and save the trees. However, if the worst happens and despite following the advice in this leaflet, you still lose any trees; then we will replace them as long you tell us within twelve months of purchase. All we ask is that you let us know as soon as a problem occurs, rather than waiting for the tree to die. We will only replace trees where our instructions have been followed.



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