



Spencer Horticultural Solutions

# Homegrown Horticulture

TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

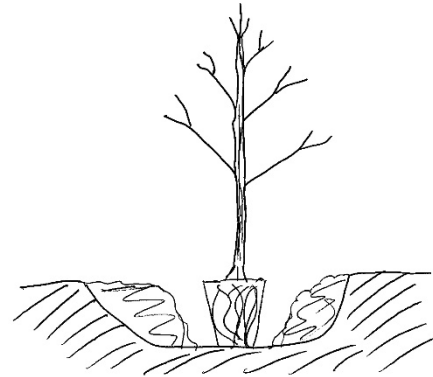
## Tips for Planting A Tree

If you've spent a lot of time and effort in picking out and buying the "right" tree for your space, you don't want that to go to waste by having it die or not thrive once it is planted. It is important to create a situation where the tree can establish and grow happily, bringing you enjoyment for years to come.

### When is the best time to plant a tree?

The best time to plant a tree depends on what kind of tree that you have and what size it is. Larger, caliper trees (those that are balled and burlap, with a large trunk) are often planted in September or October, before freeze-up.

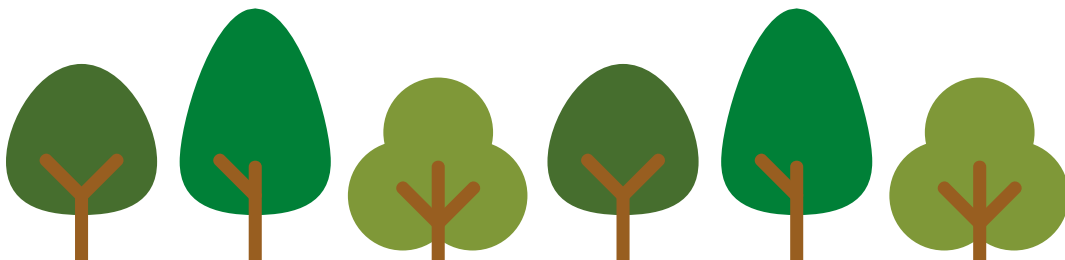
Smaller sized trees, which are typically in some size of pot or are bareroot, are what is typically planted by your average person. These are planted in spring and summer. Planting in spring means you have a whole season for the plant to grow. The later you go, the shorter time there is for plants to establish a root system and settle into place. You can start planting trees around the time that you would plant a garden, which is when temperatures have warmed up and the chance of frost is minimal.



### Things to understand about the plants that you are buying

Most of the trees and shrubs that you'll be planting are going to have some of the following characteristics:

- They'll probably be in a pot of some sort
- Some smaller ones might be a bareroot plant, but most of the time you'll buy a potted tree.
- The size of the pot or container will vary with the size of the plant. Some might be small, 2-inch pots, and the plant is just a little stick. Others will probably be anywhere between 1 and 10 gallons, or 3 to 28 litres (called #1 to #10). The size of the tree will vary quite a bit.
- They'll probably tend to be a bit on the tender side, since they'll have been brought in from another, milder area, or they will be newly emerged and leafed out. Regardless, they'll have been receiving plenty of tender, loving care, which makes them a bit wimpy when they arrive in your low-care yard.
- Most are actively growing
- Most of them will be a bit root-crowded in the container, which can lead to challenges down the road. Try and avoid trees that have root coming out of the bottom of the pot, or ones that have quite a bit of the roots circling the pot, as this will be difficult to overcome.



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## Digging a hole (well, a shallow dish-like hole)

It might seem like a great idea to dig the biggest, deepest hole you can manage. However you want to dig a hole that is wide and shallow. The hole shouldn't be much deeper than the size of the root ball of the tree that you are planting.

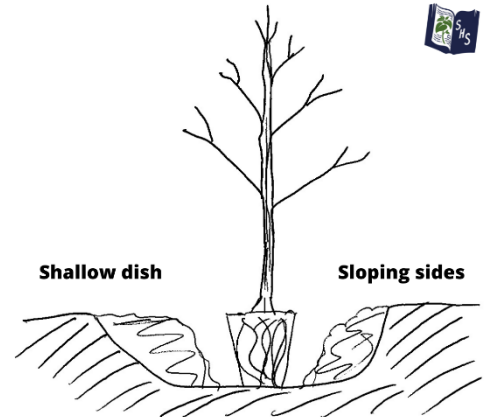
The hole should be like a shallow dish, with sloping sides. You don't want a vertically tight and sealed hole which will constrict lateral (sideways) root growth. You want the ground to the sides of the root ball to be easy for the roots to grow into.

If you are planting a balled or burlap / basket tree, make a hole that is 2 to 3 times wider than the diameter of the root ball and work up the soil around it (to a width of 5 times that width of the root ball).

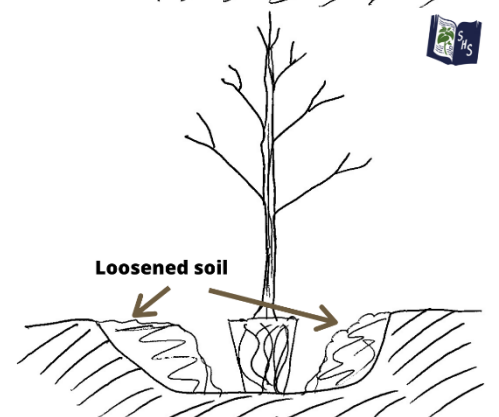
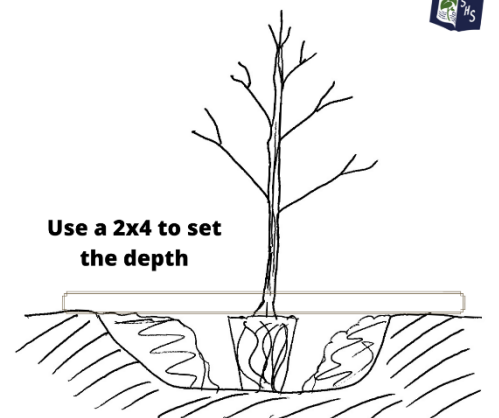
If you are planting a potted tree, dig a hole that is 3-4 times wider than the width of the root ball of your tree. So, if you are planting a #5 container (5 gallon / 15L volume), it is about 11-12 inches across, meaning you need a hole that is between 36 and 48 inches (1-1.3m or 3-4 feet) wide.

Once you've got the hole dug, you can determine if you are about the right depth by using a length of 2x4 or a shovel handle across the top of the hole and the pot, to see if you are roughly level. There will be fine-tuning before you are done, but it is easier to have it close at this point.

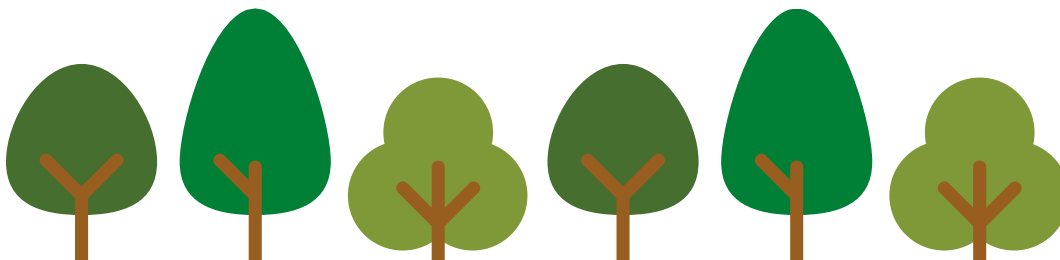
Once you've got the right sized hole/dish, you can improve the soil you removed, working it all up and breaking up the lumps. Put some of it back into the hole, so that you have firm but still loose soil, which is gently sloping towards the middle of the hole. If you have a heavy soil, you might add some organic matter, but not a whole bunch. You don't need to fertilize the tree at all.



Make hole 3-4x wider than width of container



Can amend the loosened soil - encourages lateral growth





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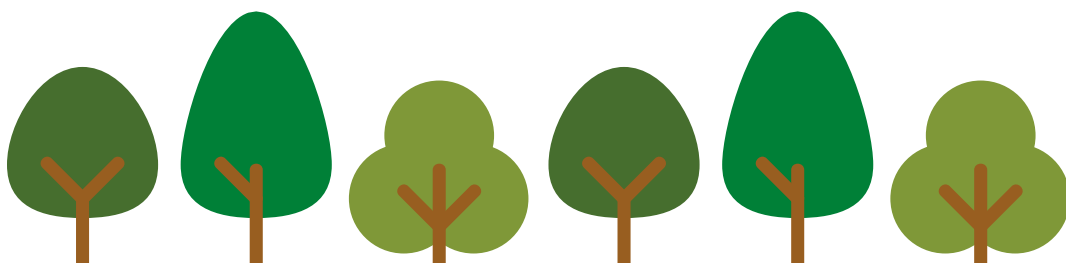
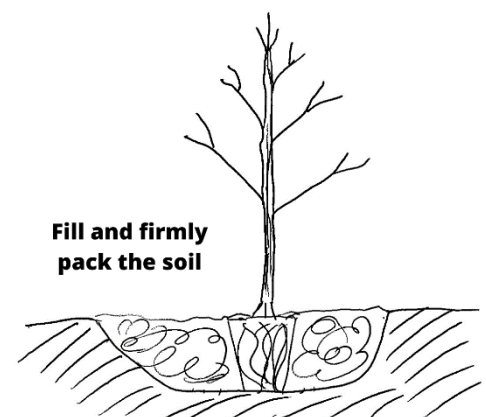
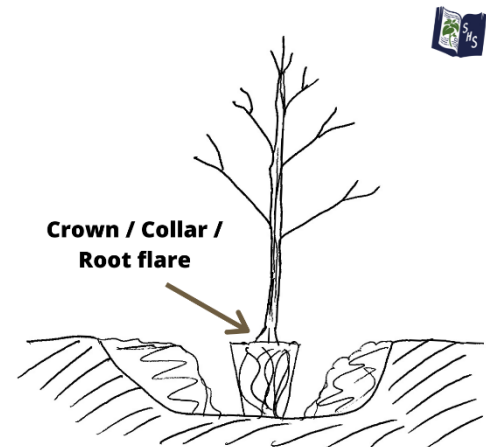
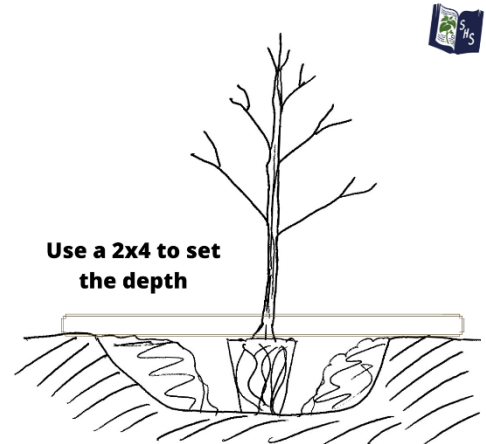
## Planting the tree

Carefully remove the root ball and tree from the pot by tapping the pot carefully on the sides. You don't want to yank out the tree by the trunk, as you might damage the roots. Once the root ball has been liberated, hopefully it won't be too rootbound (choose wisely before this point).

If the roots are crowded or somewhat rootbound, you can make an X-cut across the bottom of the root ball and then some vertical cuts up the side of the root ball. You aren't trying to saw through everything, just loosen things up a bit and maybe encourage some new rooting.

Place the tree into the bottom of the hole. Using your handy 2x4 or shovel handle, check that the hole is the correct depth. You want the crown or root collar to be just above the finished grade of the soil. If you are too deep, add some soil underneath until things sit as they should. The root collar is a flared or slightly widened area where the trunk and the roots separate into their respective areas. You don't want to bury the root collar, otherwise you can get some rotting and problems down the road.

Once you've got the depth correct, fill in the soil to make sure that the tree is properly upright and straight. Pack the soil so that there aren't any air pockets or loose areas. Once things are secure, you can continue to fill in the hole, packing as you go. Fill the hole so that the soil is just below the root collar and the root ball is just covered.





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## Post-planting efforts

Once the tree is in the ground, you want to make a sort of a lipped area a little way out from where the root ball is. This should be about one foot (30cm) or more out in all directions. This is to give you a way to put on a bunch of water that will gradually soak into the soil. Water the tree well, so that the soil is good a soaked.

Apply a 2–4-inch (5-10cm) layer of bark mulch in a 3-foot (1m) diameter area under the tree. This will conserve moisture and protect the establishing tree. When applying the mulch, don't let it rest up against the bark of the tree, as this will promote rotting. When applying mulch, always think DONUT, not VOLCANO.

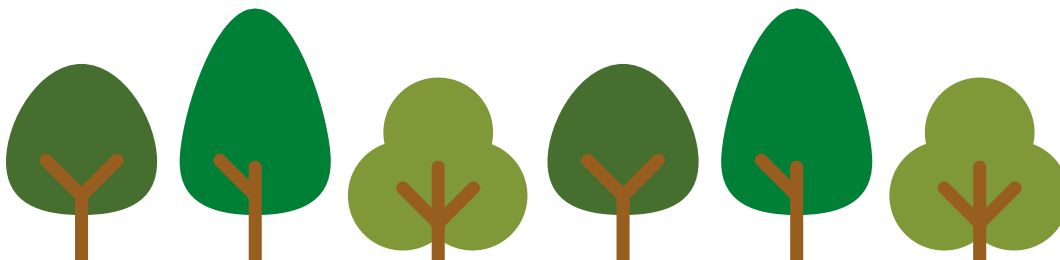
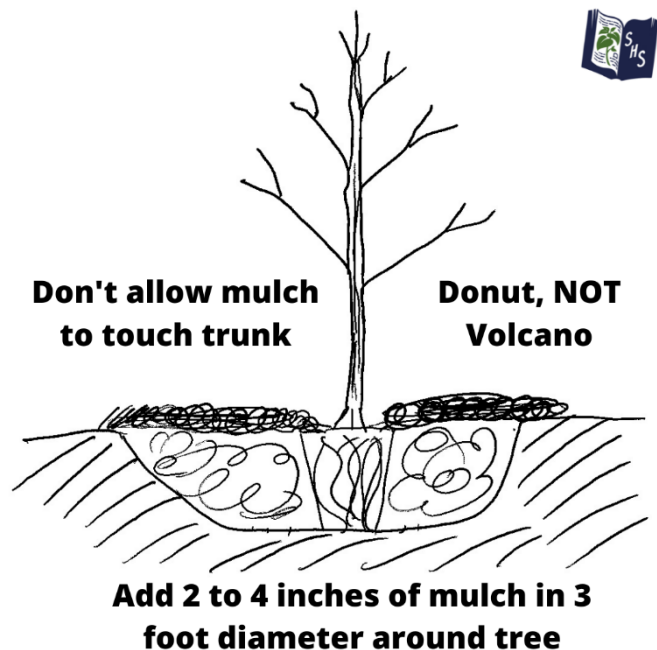
If you are in an exposed area, and the tree might be blown around a lot, you might stake the tree for a year or two (depending on how whippy it is). Be careful not to let the trunk become damaged from whatever you use to tie it (use a piece of old garden hose to blunt the rope or whatever), don't tie it too tightly, and don't forget to remove the tie when you are done.

Water occasionally, as required. If it is dry, water every week or two, focusing on deep watering out by the edges of the canopy, which is where the dripline is. The dripline is the area where most of the active roots are.

### Some good resources

The following link is an excellent resource and has a short and simple video. It uses a small tree, but the principle is the same.

<https://www.arborday.org/trees/planting/containerized.cfm>



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