



HOW TO PLANT YOUR RESIDENTIAL STREET TREES

So you have read Tacoma's *Before You Plant Residential Street Trees Packet* and now you are ready for the real deal: the planting. This packet will walk you through the important steps of planting properly to help ensure the survival of your new street trees.

RIGHT TREE, RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME?

The ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is during the dormant season the fall after leaf drop or early spring before bud-break. Weather conditions are cool and allow plants to establish roots in the new location before spring rains and summer heat stimulate new top growth. However, trees properly cared for in the nursery or garden center, and given the appropriate care during transport to prevent damage, can be planted throughout the growing season.

WAIT! BEFORE YOU PLANT, DID YOU...

1. Select a tree that fits the needs of your site and you (Size, water needs, aesthetics, & etc.)?
2. Call to have your underground utilities located?

NOW ON TO THE BEST PART, THE DIGGING! A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO PLANTING:

- 🔨 On your selected site, dig a hole *3 times* the width of the root ball and just as deep as the root ball depth. The sides of the holes should slant gradually out away from the center.

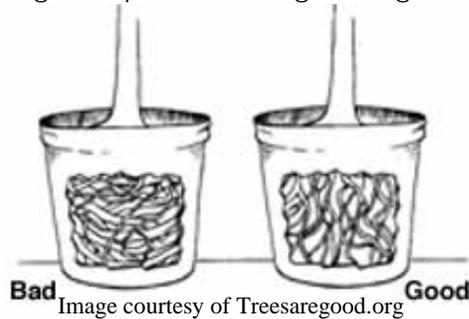
It is important to make the hole wide because the roots on the newly establishing tree must push through surrounding soil in order to establish. On most planting sites in new developments, the existing soils have been compacted and are unsuitable for healthy root growth. Breaking up the soil in a large area around the tree provides the newly emerging roots room to expand into loose soil to hasten establishment.



For bare-root trees: neatly cut away any broken or damaged roots. Soak the roots for a few hours prior to planting to allow them to absorb water.

Container-grown trees: Remove from the plastic or metal containers. Inspect the root ball for circling roots and cut or remove them. Expose the trunk flare*, if necessary. Remove the top half of pressed peat/paper containers.

Balled and Burlapped ("B&B") trees: cut all of the ropes. Pull the burlap at least 1/3 of the way down; slit remaining burlap to encourage root growth. If in a wire basket, remove from the basket.



- ✿ *Before placing the tree in the hole, check to see that the hole has been dug to the proper depth and no more. The majority of the roots on the newly planted tree will develop in the top 12 inches of soil. If the tree is planted too deeply, new roots will have difficulty developing because of a lack of oxygen. It is *better* to plant the tree a little high, about 2 to 3 inches above the base of the trunk flare*, than to plant it at or below the original growing level. This planting level will allow for some settling.*

Planting your tree too deep will kill it eventually!

*The **trunk flare** is where the roots spread at the base of the tree, the part where the tree trunk is the largest size before tapering up. This point should be partially visible after the tree has been planted. If it is not, you may have to remove some soil from the top of the root ball. Find it so you can determine how deep the hole needs to be for proper planting.

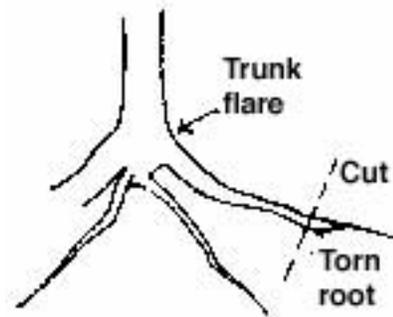


Image courtesy of Treesaregood.org

- ✿ **Gently** place the tree in the hole; to avoid damage when setting the tree in the hole, always lift the tree by the root ball and never by the trunk.
- ✿ Straighten the tree in the hole. **Before** you begin backfilling, have someone view the tree from several directions to confirm that the tree is straight. Once you begin backfilling, it is difficult to reposition the tree.
- ✿ Partially (about 1/3) backfill with the soil from the hole, water to settle the soil, then finish back-filling the hole and water again. It is not recommended to apply fertilizer at the time of planting.
 - In heavy clay soil, plant 2-3 inches above the base of the trunk flare (where the roots meet the main stem) rather than at or below the original growing level
 - In sandy soil, then plant at grade so that the soil at the top of the root ball doesn't erode or dry out. Overall, plant the root ball so that once some settling of the soil occurs, the trunk FLARE is at grade level.

- c. Using TAGRO: Use TAGRO Mix the way you would use steer manure. Enrich soil gradually with repeated light applications rather than once with a heavy application. TAGRO Mix should always be used in thin layers, never as fill or topsoil replacement. Cover with a tarp any TAGRO Mix you aren't using right away to protect it from the rain. TAGRO Mix is much easier to spread when it is dry.

- 🌿 *Remove* tags and labels.
- 🌿 Do not stake unless the tree has a large crown, or if the planting is situated on a site where wind or people may push the tree over. **Stake for a maximum of one growing year.**
- 🌿 Prune only *dead* or *damaged* branches. (See Tacoma's *After You Plant Care Packet* for more information).
- 🌿 *Mulch* the base of the tree. Mulch is simply organic matter applied to the area at the base of the tree. (See Tacoma's *After You Plant Care Packet* for more information).
 - a. Why mulch? It acts as a blanket to hold moisture, it moderates soil temperature extremes, and it reduces competition from grass and weeds. Some good choices are leaf litter, pine straw, shredded bark, peat moss, or composted wood chips.
 - b. How much? A 2- to 4-inch layer is ideal. More than 4 inches may cause a problem with oxygen and moisture levels. When placing mulch, be sure that the actual trunk of the tree is not covered. Doing so may cause decay of the living bark at the base of the tree. A mulch-free area, 1 to 2 inches wide at the base of the tree, is sufficient to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay.

Think of the tree you just purchased (or ordered) as a lifetime investment. How well your tree, and investment, grows depends on the type of tree and location you select for planting, the care you provide when the tree is planted, and follow-up care the tree receives after planting

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST...

Provide follow-up care. Keep the soil moist but not soaked; over-watering and under-watering causes leaves to turn yellow or fall off. **Water** the trees at least once a week, barring rain, and more frequently during hot weather. **Remember, if you are thirsty more, generally speaking, so are your trees!** When the soil is below the surface of the mulch is dry (approximately 1" below the soil surface actually), it is time to water. Continue until mid-fall, tapering off for lower temperatures that require less-frequent watering. (See Tacoma's *After You Plant Care Packet* for more information).

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions that aren't addressed in this packet or in *After You Plant Care Packet*, please feel free to email trees@cityoftacoma.org, visit the City of Tacoma website at www.cityoftacoma.org/evergreentacoma, consult your local ISA Certified Arborist or a tree care or garden center professional for assistance.

Information was gathered from and more can be found at the following:

