



## Planting Guide for Container Trees, Shrubs and Perennials

Visit Wise Nurseries' YouTube channel for a planting demonstration video.

### **Proper plant installation**

- Dig hole 2-3 times wider, but the same depth as the root ball. This will promote roots to expand vigorously, but keep plant from settling lower in the ground over time.
- If the root ball has a flat bottom, the hole should have a flat bottom so there are no air pockets under the plant.
- Remove plant from pot as gently as possible. On larger material, it might be necessary to lay the plant on its side and pull the pot off. With smaller material, you may turn the plant upside-down with stem between fingers, and pull the pot off with other hand. Always handle plant material by the pots as much as possible to help prevent damaging the plant.
- At this stage, examine the roots. If any are circling the root ball, lightly loosen them with your hand, claw or rake. This practice will help promote roots to start reaching out rather than staying balled up. Keep this practice to a bare minimum if installing during late spring or summer months because plants are more prone to shock during that time of year.
- Set plant in hole. Be sure the top of the root ball is level or slightly higher than the surrounding ground level.
- Begin to back-fill 1/3 of the depth at a time. (The larger the root ball, the more important this is.) Pack every layer very firmly leaving no air pockets. An old broken shovel or rake handle works well to pack the soil; or this may be done by hand as well. Lightly watering as you back-fill will help the soil settle properly.
- If the plant is located in an irrigated location, or is easily accessed to be hand watered, **DO NOT** build a watering burm around it. These burms can inhibit top feeder roots from vigorous expansion and oxygen, resulting in a slower growing plant. Only make a small watering burm (mounding soil just outside root balls surface area) if plant is in a rural location that has to be hand watered. Fill burm up with water, allowing it to seep slowly into the ground.

### **Use a starter fertilizer**

- Bio-Tone Starter Plus fertilizer is one of the best available because it not only provides basic elements to the plant, but feeds the soil as well. It contains several different types of bacteria and fungi, including mycorrhizae. This special fungus forms a symbiotic relationship with the plant that gives roots increased water and nutrient absorption capabilities. The bacteria and fungi are solar sensitive, meaning sunlight will kill it so be sure to apply to the bottom and sides of the hole while it is back filled. Do not apply to the surface.
- Root Stimulator by Ferti-lome is another option. It is a liquid feed of several elements, but predominantly liquid phosphate, which gives you aggressive root growth. This may be applied on the surface after plant material is installed by pouring over roots like simply watering the plant. To get the best results, reapply every 2 weeks for a total of 2-3 treatments.
- Have an idea of your PH levels in the area being planted. Most plants like to be between 6 and 7, but there are some exceptions. The PH level tester gages how alkaline or acidic the soil is. The PH level directly effects how the plants absorb nutrients, and will show in plant vigor and health over time as the roots begin to spread out into the surrounding soil. A top dressing of lime (will raise PH) or sulfur (will lower PH) may be needed upon install. You may also consider planting acid loving plants in locations to lower PH levels.

### **Soil Amendments**

- Plants will benefit from amendments if soil conditions are solid sand, clay or mostly rock lacking any organic, humus material. If the soil has some black color to it, and is at least a little spongy, it most likely has some organic material in it. If the soil does have some organic matter in it, do not use soil amendments as this may hinder plant roots from reaching out in the long run.
- If using soil amendments, blend about  $\frac{1}{4}$  amendments to  $\frac{3}{4}$  existing soil, then use to back fill hole. If soil conditions are really bad, up to a  $\frac{1}{2}$  amendment to  $\frac{1}{2}$  existing blend may be used.



## **Mulching**

- Mulch helps keep moisture from rapid evaporation, shades roots during times of high temperatures, helps insulate during times of low temperatures, helps suppress weeds, and looks cosmetically sharp.
- Pine straw, pine bark, shredded hardwoods, and chipped hard woods are among the best mulches for landscape use. A 2-4 inch layer should be sufficient; Pine straw should be laid at 6 inches thick because it settles.

## **Watering**

- Never let plants dry out before installing.
- After installing, plants should be thoroughly watered in.
- How much water in the first few weeks, and in the long run, may vary depending on soil conditions and time of year. Sandy soils and/or warmer temperatures will require more water, while heavy clay soils and/or cooler temperatures will require less.
- Some plant material requires a little more water and wet feet, while others require a little less water and dryer feet. Group plants and watering schedules according to plant demands and actual site conditions. This will help insure that plants thrive, perform and live. For example: Install a swamp hibiscus where it tends to stay moist, and install a yucca where it tends to stay pretty dry.
- When watering, be sure to thoroughly soak the root ball.
- Within an hour after watering, the soil should be damp and moist but not waterlogged and muddy. Within 24hrs after watering, if there is no moisture 3 inches down, that means you are not applying enough.
- When possible, try not to wet foliage; this only contributes to spreading fungus and bacteria. Watering only the roots is always better. This is one of many reasons drip irrigation is far superior to overhead watering.



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Watering Schedule To Establish Plants					
	FALL	Winter	Spring	Summer	
	(65-80 degrees)	(below 65 degrees)	(65-85 degrees)	(86+ degrees)	
1st Week	2-3	3-5	1-2	1	
2nd Week	3-4	4-6	2-3	1-2	
3rd Week	4-5	7-0	3-4	2-3	
4th Week	4-6	7-0	3-4	2-3	
<b>First 2 Years Water Schedule</b>					
	4-6	7-0	3-4	2-3	
		If chart reads 2-3, that means water every 2nd or 3rd day depending on temperature, soil and type of plant.			
		If on any given day, site receives a half inch of rain, that will be sufficient until next water date.			
		Temperatures and seasons represent average daytime highs			
		This schedule applies to material planted in the ground, potted material is different			

## **Staking**

- Trees 4ft plus in height may need to be staked depending on tree structure and site conditions.
- Always leave a little play when staking a tree so it may naturally sway with the wind a little. The tree will actually grow faster and stronger.
- Always pad wire or rope that is touching the tree trunk to be sure they don't cut or girdle the trunk. Pre fabricated staking kits usually have sufficient design. If using a homemade stake system, an old cut up hose with wire or rope running through it works well.
- If the tree is located in an area protected from strong winds, or root ball is just as large or larger than tree head, staking may not be required.
- Never leave stakes on for more than one growing season. They are strictly to keep trees from rocking in the hole and to maintain good posture until fully rooted in.