

The Importance of Mulching

A newly planted tree's best friend is mulch. It is very important to remember to mulch your tree after you have planted it.



Mulch is a valuable for your trees health and care because

- Mulch insulates the soil helping to provide a buffer from heat and cold temperatures.
- Mulch retains water helping to keep the roots moist.
- Mulch keeps weeds out to help prevent root competition.
- Mulch prevents soil compaction.
- Mulch reduces lawn mower damage.

Steps to Adding Mulch Around Your Tree

1. Add mulch to the base of your tree by removing any grass within a 3 to 10 foot area depending on the size of your tree.
2. Pour natural mulch such as wood chips or bark pieces 2 to 4 inches deep within the circle.
3. Keep the mulch from touching the trunk of the tree.

Tree Watering

Tree watering is a key part of tree care and it is difficult to recommend an exact amount due to the varieties of climates. But a few rules of thumb will help guide you to water your trees properly.



- **Watering Newly Planted Trees:** For new trees, water immediately after you plant a tree.
- **Watering Trees During First Two Years:** During the first couple growing seasons, your newly planted tree is expending a lot of energy trying to get its roots established in the soil. Especially during the first few summers of your new trees life, it will have a difficult time dealing with heat and drought. You can make this easier by providing water and covering the soil with wood-chip mulch. Deep watering can help speed the root establishment. Deep water consists of keeping the soil moist to a depth that includes all the roots.
- **How Much Water and When:** Not enough water is harmful for the tree but too much water is bad as well. Over-watering is a common tree care mistake. Please note that moist is different than soggy, and you can judge this by feel. A damp soil that dries for a short period will allow adequate oxygen to permeate the soil.

As a rule of thumb your soil should be moist. Usually 30 seconds with a steady stream of water from a garden hose w/ a diffuser nozzle per tree seedlings is sufficient. Mulching is also key in retaining moisture in the soil.

You can check soil moisture by using a garden trowel and inserting it into the ground to a depth of 2", and then move the blade of the trowel back and forth to create a small narrow trench. Then use your finger to touch the soil. If it is moist to the touch, then they do not need water.

- **Watering Trees After the First Two Years:** After your tree has been established in your yard for two years the roots will be established. This will allow your tree to withstand a wider range of water conditions including on its own because it has a proper root structure.

Drought-Tolerant Species

If your area constantly deals with drought you will want to consider trees listed as drought-tolerant. These trees are adapted to sites in their native habitat that regularly experience prolonged dry spells. Although they are native to drought and are more tolerant than others the first few years of life is critical to the survival of the any tree and follow the steps above will help your trees grow.

Some Drought-Tolerant Species Include

- [Thornless Honeylocust](#) (Zones 3 to 9)
- [Arizona Cypress](#) (Zones 7 to 9)
- [Japanese Zelkova](#) (Zones 5 to 8)
- [Mugo Pine](#) (Zones 3 to 7)

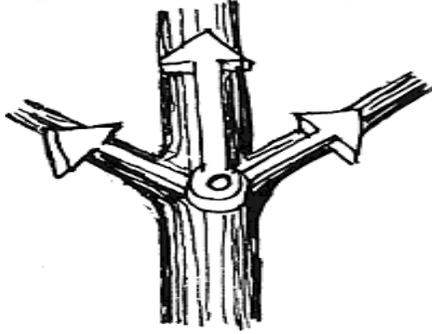
High Soil Moisture-Tolerant Species

On the opposite side of the spectrum if your area deals with a large amount of moisture or wet conditions here are a few trees that will do better in wet conditions.

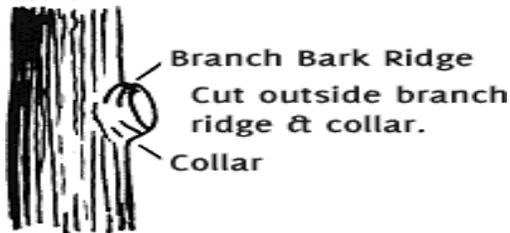
- Swamp White Oak
- [Baldecypress](#) (Zones 4 to 10)
- [Shellbark Hickory](#) (Zones 5 to 8)
- [Red Maple](#) (Zones 3 to 9)
- [Silver Maple](#) (Zones 3 to 9)
- [Paper Birch](#) (Zones 2 to 7)
- [River Birch](#) (Zones 4 to 9)
- [Weeping Willow](#) (Zones 6 to 8)

Keys to Good Pruning

1. Begin visual inspection at the top of the tree and work downward.



2. Use The 1/3 and 1/4 Rules of Pruning
 1. Never remove more than 1/4 of a tree's crown in a season
 2. Ideally, main side branches should be at least 1/3 smaller than the diameter of the trunk.
 3. For most deciduous (broadleaf) trees, don't prune up from the bottom any more than 1/3 of the tree's total height.
 4. Where possible, try to encourage side branches that form angles that are 1/3 off vertical that form "10 o'clock" or "2 o'clock" angles with the trunk.
3. For most species, the tree should have a single trunk. Identify the best leader and later branches before you begin pruning and remove defective parts before pruning for form.
4. Don't worry about protecting pruning cuts. For aesthetics, you may feel better painting large wounds but it doesn't prevent or reduce decay.
5. Keep tools sharp. One-hand pruning shears with curved blades work best on young trees.
6. For high branches use a pole pruner. A major job on a big tree should be done by a professional arborist.



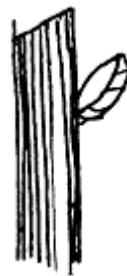
7. For larger branches, cut outside the branch bark and ridge collar (swollen area). Do not leave a protruding stub. If the limb is too small to have formed a collar cut close.
8. When simply shortening a small branch, make the cut at a lateral bud or another lateral branch. Favor a bud that will produce a branch that will grow in desired direction (usually outward). The cut should be sharp and clean and made at a slight angle about 1/4 inch beyond the bud.



Correct Pruning Cut



Too Close



Too Long



Too Slanted

How to Identify Pest & Disease Problems



To properly diagnose a pest or disease problem begin by contacting the Cooperative Extension Service in your county or parish.

Your local Cooperative Extension agent is the best source for assistance with home gardening pest and disease questions. With the help of volunteer Master Gardeners, your County Cooperative Extension can quickly answer most inquiries about plant health care and local conditions. Extension specialists are also available to perform pest and disease diagnosis for homeowners and professionals—including certified arborists, nursery growers, landscapers, and orchardists.

Selecting a Healthy Tree

Good tree care starts with a healthy tree. Follow these tips and learn how to buy a tree.

What to Look for on Your New Tree

Inspecting your tree upon delivery or at the nursery will help your tree provide a lifetime of benefits.

- **Bare root tree:** Abundant root growth, fibrous and numerous small roots, good color; moist
- **Balled and burlapped tree (B&B):** Firm soil ball, with trunk securely tied. Do not accept a plant with a broken “ball”. Do not accept a tree with circling roots at the base of the trunk. Always carry B&B plants by the soil ball, not the trunk, stems or branches.
- **Container-grown tree (containerized and potted):** Avoid trees that are “root-bound” in the can. Roots can circle around the edge of the container may become circling roots. (Cut any circling roots when planting.) Because of this, B&B trees are generally preferred for large trees. Always remove can, basket or pot when planting.



Bare Root Seedlings

- Roots should be moist & fibrous.
- Deciduous seedlings should have roots about equal to stem length.



Containerized

- Soil plug should be moist and firm.
- Avoid tall, spindly tops. Well-developed roots are more important.



Balled & Burlapped

- Root ball should be firm to the touch, especially near the trunk.
- Root ball should be adequate for the tree's



Potted

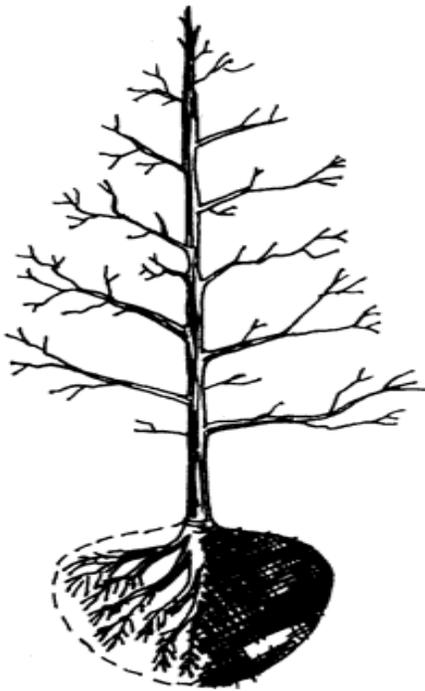
- Pot should not contain large, circling roots.
- Pruned roots cut cleanly, none wider than a finger.
- Soil & roots joined

size.

tightly.

Some Extra Things to Consider When Purchasing Mature Trees

When choosing trees for city plantings along streets and in parks, you will want to trees with fairly substantial caliper (trunk diameter).



- Strong, well-developed leader (or leaders in a multi-leader tree).
- Bright, healthy bark.
- Trunk & limbs free of insect or mechanical injury.
- Branches well-distributed around trunk, considerably smaller caliper than trunk.
- Ideal spacing between branches, at least 8–12" for most species.
- Good trunk taper.
- Wide-angle crotches for strength.
- Low branches—they are temporary, but help develop taper, promote trunk caliper growth, and prevent sun damage.

After a good start with good nursery stock, now it is time to learn how to plant your tree.