

# How to Plant a Tree

*Indeed, “the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago and the second best time is NOW.” But done incorrectly, your effort will have been wasted.*

While planting a tree can be as simple as putting a stick into the soil, it often requires a bit more effort than that. If properly planted, a tree stands a better chance of surviving, thereby reducing costs and making the experience a bit more enjoyable.

First, consider your growing conditions, such as amount of sun, quality of soil, moisture content, use of the area, and where you live. We like to encourage the use of native trees and shrubs. You can find information on species that are good for Pennsylvania at [http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_20029752.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20029752.pdf)



Second, consider your timing. The longer a freshly planted tree has to adjust to hot summer conditions, the better. In Pennsylvania, fall is a great time, as is early spring. Skip the summer plantings.

Next, prepare the planting hole. It is recommended to make the hole three times wider than the current root mass, but avoid making the hole deeper than the current container in which the plant is growing. You can test this by putting your shovel handle across the opening of the hole. It should lay flat on the root ball, but not be above or below. You don't want the flare of the tree to be in the soil—this

could kill the tree. (It's okay to have the root ball a little higher, just never lower).

Loosen the root ball to allow the roots to be free of their current circular pattern for best growth results.

Back fill the hole with the existing soil.

Try to reduce any air pockets by spraying with water as you backfill at the halfway and full points. While you can tamp around the soil, sometimes this leads to over compaction.

Starting about two inches from the trunk, mulch around the tree with organic matter such as leaf or bulk mulch. Mulch should extend out to the dripline of the tree and will help retain much needed water and keep the roots cooler. NEVER mulch up the tree trunk, as it is a sure fire way to kill the tree.

Proper watering is the final key to success. It can take weeks to months for a tree to establish itself, so be patient. For best results, you want irrigation that is slow and deep, allowing the soil around the roots to be saturated. But don't over water. Watch the tree—it will tell you if it needs more, or less, water.

Adapted from:  
[www.growinggreenerworld.com/how-to-](http://www.growinggreenerworld.com/how-to-)