



How to successfully

You've selected a tree or shrub, and it's planting time. By following these simple steps and putting in a little labor, you will be rewarded with a lifetime of enjoyment!

Step 1. Before making the purchase, examine and measure the site to make sure it fits the mature size requirements of the selected tree. A good rule of thumb is to keep shrubs a minimum of 5 feet away and trees 20 feet away from the foundations of buildings and 30 feet away from a septic system drainfield. Next, look up! Are there overhead electrical or phone lines above the planting site? If yes, select a new tree site. Finally, make a call. Before digging, call "One Call of Wyoming" at (800) 849-2476 to have a representative visit the site to ensure underground utility or natural gas lines are not in the way.

Step 2. Make the hole at least twice the width of the container or, in the case of a balled-and-burlapped (B&B) tree, the rootball. Use the container as an outline (photo 1), or measure the width of the rootball. For bare-root trees, dig the hole at least twice as wide as the extended root system.

Step 3. Make the hole only as deep as the rootball of the tree or the soil depth in the container. A bare-root tree should be planted only as deep as the original soil line, which will be a darkened area at the base of the trunk. Planting deeper is a serious mistake and could kill the tree (photos 2 and 3).

Step 4. If you have clay soils, use the edge of your shovel to roughen up the sides of the planting hole. This helps tree roots penetrate the clay soil (photo 4).

Step 5. If you have a containerized tree, lay the tree down on its side and loosen the rootball from the container to ease removal, or carefully cut the container off. In this case, the homeowner used her knee and body weight to loosen the rootball (photo 5).

Step 6. Gently pull the rootball out of the container. Using a pocketknife or box cutter, cut the circling roots in three to four locations around the sides and bottom of the rootball. Cut no deeper than 1 inch into the rootball (photo 6). The reason why circling roots are cut is to stop this growth pattern and to form new root hairs to grow into the soil. When planting, carefully handle trees by the rootball, not the trunk, taking care not to damage the



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root system. If the tree is a B&B, place the plant gently in the hole, making sure it is not too deep. Once the tree is in the proper place, carefully cut away the burlap and twine to promote root growth and prevent girdling.

Step 7. After making sure the tree is straight, begin backfilling the hole. There is no need to add amendments such as compost, peat moss, or fertilizer. Getting your tree acclimated to the soil is most important. After backfilling one-half to three-quarter of the way, gently but firmly pack the soil around the base of the rootball and slowly water to help settle the soil and fill in air pockets. Continue adding soil until even with the top of the root system (photo 7).

Step 8. Make a berm (raised ring of soil) around the tree out of leftover soil and again slowly water the planting hole. Fill with any extra soil if needed (photo 8).

Step 9. Mulch around the tree. Mulch, such as the wood mulch used here (photo 9), keeps the roots of the tree cool and moist and conserves water during the

growing season. Apply up to 6 inches of coarse mulch, or 3 inches of fine-textured mulch, but keep it away from the trunk. A 2-inch mulch-free area around the base of the tree is sufficient to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay. Within a month, the mulch will compact down to a depth of about three inches. Apply wood mulch as wide around the planting area as possible. If using rock mulch, add up to 2 inches. Hand water every few days, but don't create a bog! Poke your finger in the soil before watering to see if it's still moist – if so, do not water.

Step 10. Not every tree needs staked! Staking is used to keep the rootball from moving and helps establish roots in the soil. Move the newly planted tree back and forth with your hand, mimicking the effects of our western breezes. If the rootball moves, stake; otherwise leave it alone. Stakes should be removed within six months (photo 10).

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