



SUCCESSFUL TREE

It isn't easy growing trees and shrubs in Wyoming – one look at the prairies suggests that trees and shrubs aren't in the cards! But residents can grow trees, and to make the effort worthwhile the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service has developed an action plan consisting of seven planting strategies.

1. **Location, Location, Location!** This real estate term says it all when determining where to plant a tree or shrub. Never plant trees next to a home or outbuildings. No matter how small and cuddly they are when small, trees grow up! They can interfere with the integrity of a foundation, and the long-term health of the tree can be compromised. Trees should be planted at least 20 feet from a foundation, and shrubs should be kept at least five feet away. As corny as this sounds, look up before planting! If there are utility lines above the planting site, move the tree. In ten years this will pay off.

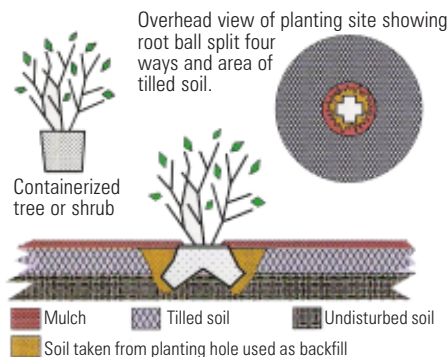


Poor placement of these junipers have made travel impossible in winter on this country lane.

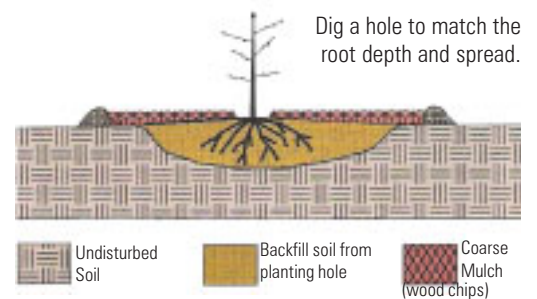
Wind is a serious problem for most of Wyoming, and planting locations should be carefully considered so snow drifting won't become an issue.

2. **Site Preparation.** Prepare the planting site by spading or rototilling an area at least two times the diameter of the root ball (example: if the root ball is 2 feet across then the area to be tilled will be 4 feet). Dig the hole only as deep as to the top of the root crown, the area on a tree where the roots start to grow. Planting deeper may result in death of the tree. It is much better for the tree, to err on planting too shallow than too deep!

Containerized Trees and Shrubs



Bare Root Tree Planting



PLANTING STRATEGIES

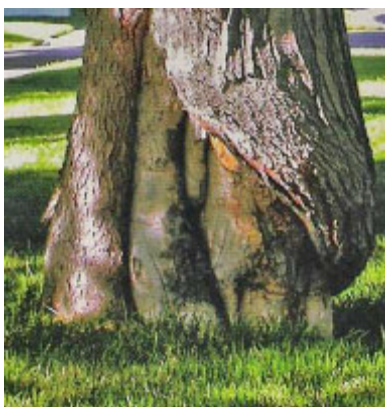
3. **Amend the soil?** The research is fairly clear – don't! That is, adding peat moss or aged manures into the planting soil mix provides no benefit to the trees. Research has shown that in some cases this can actually hurt trees' ability to survive and flourish.
4. **Remove all man-made items from the root ball.** Things like wire, burlap, and string need to be removed once the tree is in place but before backfilling begins. If left in place, these materials can cause severe root girdling.
5. **Watering.** Think in thirds! After a tree is planted, backfill the hole with soil until it is about one-third full, and then add water. By adding water this helps to eliminate any air pockets that may have occurred. Make sure all the air pockets are filled in with the water. Continue this process until completed, but don't tamp the soil. Air pockets should be eliminated without compacting the soil.
6. **Fertilizing.** It seems natural to add fertilizer to a newly planted tree. After all, that's the common strategy in the garden. But in practice, adding fertilizer to a newly planted tree can actually harm it! The tree needs to adapt to its new site, not produce a crop, and

unlike a tomato plant that may get a full dose of fertilizer, a tree has many more years to grow and produce. In general, one can begin to fertilize trees in the year following planting, typically in late May or early June. A soil test done with the assistance of a UW Extension Office will help determine what a tree's fertilizer requirements are.

7. **Mulching the tree area.** Next to proper planting depth, mulching is one of the most important steps to ensuring the survival of trees and shrubs. Use a course-textured mulch like wood or bark chips, or rock. Usually wood mulch is preferred, but in high-wind areas, pea gravel to fist-sized rocks is recommended. Mulch does extraordinary things like allowing for longer retention of soil moisture from the drying effects of the sun and wind. By applying mulch to the surface, water usage can be cut by up to 75 percent. Mulch reduces the compaction of soils around a tree, allowing roots to grow easily into the soil. It also keeps soils cooler in the summer and offers insulation in the winter. Mulch also helps to keep grass and weeds away from trees, eliminating potential damage caused by weed-eaters and lawn-mowers.



Mulches reduce water loss, keep soil temperature moderate, and allow for good root development



Weed-eater and lawn mower damage can cause long-term damage to trees. Keep grass and weeds away from trees by applying a mulch.

Tom Heald is an extension educator for the University of Wyoming CES in Natrona county and can be reached at (307) 235-9400 or theald@natronacounty-wy.gov.

Photos and some text were supplied by the Cheyenne Urban Forestry publication *Basic Tree Care for Wyoming*. It is available at <http://www.cheyennetrees.com/assistance.html>.