



Planting Guide

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General Guidelines

Optimal planting times: early morning, late afternoon or on a cool, overcast day. Keep plants moist and in the shade until planted.

Soil - Soil preparation is a key factor in successful planting. Know your own soil. You may need to amend your existing soil by adding compost, manure, or leaf litter. Aim for 2/3 garden soil and 1/3 organic matter. But, your soil may be perfectly fine as is. Mix the soil thoroughly and do not add fertilizer at this time.

Planting Holes - Dig a hole twice as wide as the root mass and slightly deeper than the root ball. Put a little soil back into the bottom of the hole so that the top of the root ball will be level with the existing soil. A hole too deep leads to plant stress. You want the soil to settle without leaving any air pockets.

Roots - Container-grown plants need their roots teased out by your fingers or a fork. This will help the roots break out of their container soil and reach into their new soil. It may sometimes be necessary to cut the bottom of some roots apart by scoring them with a sharp knife.

Mulch - In spring and summer, mulch helps hold in the moisture and keeps plant roots cool. In fall and Winter, mulch helps protect plants against frost, heave and drying-out. Do not mulch deeply around stems as it weakens them.

Water - The success of your plants depends on proper watering. When you plant, give your plantings a full, thorough soaking. Ideally, your plants will receive 2” of rain a week but if nature doesn’t cooperate, avoid wide sprinkling with the hose and soak the root zone deeply instead. Newly planted perennials, shrubs and trees should be watered 3 times a week for the first two weeks (unless it has rained at least 1” a week.) As the plant establishes itself, watering two times a week or once a week will be sufficient.

When to Plant		
Annuals		spring to summer after the last frost
Bulbs		
Spring-flowering		fall, before ground freezes
Summer-flowering		early spring to early summer
Fall-Flowering		summer to early fall
Perennials- Container-grown		spring, summer, early fall
Roses- Container-grown		spring, summer, early fall
Shrubs/Trees-Container-grown		spring, summer, fall

Annuals - Before you plant, consider the mature size (height and width) of your selection. Avoid planting annuals where they will compete with large tree roots for nutrients and moisture ... they have only one growing season and can get aggressive! Annuals often come in cell packs and have shallow roots but they still require 6"-8" of good soil. With a trowel, make a hole double the length and breadth of the root mass. Work a handful of compost into the soil. Pry the young plants apart with your thumbs and loosen the roots. You may have to actually cut them apart with a sharp knife but this will not damage the plant. Holding the plant upright, gently loosen and spread the roots. Set the plant slightly deeper in the hole than it was in the container. Refill the hole with soil. Tamp down the soil firmly with your fingers to stabilize the plant. Add enough water to fill the indentation you made by tamping the soil. Scatter a slow-release granular fertilizer after planting.

Containers and Hanging Baskets - Using containers and baskets is a low-risk way to experiment with new and exciting flower combinations in your garden. You can create new color palettes and use exciting foliage. Choose your plants carefully ... sun vs. shade lovers, heavy feeders vs. easy care ... and don't mix up the types in the same container or basket. Many experts recommend a mix of spiky plants, rounded plants and trailing plants for maximum effect. Look at the overall shape of the plant you want to use. Consider where you are going to place the container or basket. You want to be able to see them and care for them easily. Containers and hanging baskets should strengthen the over-all design of your garden and can be used to bring color and style to a neglected area. Use a good potting soil made specifically for containers and baskets. Be sure it includes peat moss, vermiculite, perlite and bark. Annuals grown in containers and baskets require more care. The constant watering needed depletes the soil of nitrogen. Use a granulated, slow-release fertilizer at planting time. Supplement, as necessary, with a general liquid fertilizer 2 times a week. Some plants, morning glories e.g., should be fertilized at a much lower rate (i.e. 1 time every 7-10 days). Watering is a constant. In hot weather, some containers and hanging baskets will have to be watered daily. Deadhead and cut back as required. As the season progresses, don't be afraid to cut back a straggling plant to encourage new growth or even to rotate new plants in and out.

Perennials - Most perennials can be planted almost any time in the growing season. If possible, plant in groups of three, five or more. Consider the mature height and width of the plant when you site it. Give a containerized plant a good soaking before you plant it to help the transition from pot to ground. Dig the hole before you remove the plant from the container --- 2 times the width of the pot but no deeper. Loosen the soil in the bottom of the planting hole. Add some compost to the soil you removed from the hole and use that when you plant. Remove the plant from the container. Gently untangle and break up the root system. If the plant has a tight, thick root system, it may be necessary to slice the roots with a knife or shovel. Set the plant in the hole at the same depth it was growing in the container. Spread the roots in the hole and fill in the soil half-way to the top. Make sure there are no air holes. Give the plant some water and let it drain through. Fill the remainder of the hole, tamp down firmly, and water again. Monitor weather conditions and adjust your watering schedule accordingly so that the plant receives at least 1" of rainwater per week.

Roses - Roses grow best in full sun but can manage nicely on 6 hours of sun daily. They need good air circulation. Dig a planting hole larger and wider than the container. Roses have many lateral roots so be sure to loosen the dirt at the sides of the hole. Amend the soil with organic matter --- bone meal promotes strong stem growth and flowering. Fill the hole with water and let it seep in. Remove the rose from its container. Keep the soil around its roots intact but mix some of the container soil with the soil in the hole. Position the rose at its proper depth and fill the hole halfway with amended soil. Tamp the soil down gently but firmly. Pour in a bucket of water and check for air holes. When the water has soaked in, add the remaining soil to the hole and tamp down. Create a watering basin around the plant by building a 2"-3" earthen berm. Mulch the rose. Keep the mulch away from the stem.

Container-grown Shrubs and Trees - Dig a wide hole, twice as wide as the container but not much deeper and loosen the soil. Remove the shrub or tree from the container and check the root ball. If encircling roots are present, take a sharp knife or shovel and cut up and down the root ball 1"-1.5" deep, in 4 or 5 places. Position the tree or shrub in the hole at the same depth as the plant grew in the container. Lay a broom handle across the top of the hole to determine that the plant is sitting properly. Holding the tree or shrub upright, fill the hole half full of soil and compact lightly. Water well. After the water is absorbed, fill the hole completely with soil and tamp down lightly. Create a watering basin around the tree or shrub by building a 2"-3" earthen berm. Water again and mulch. Do not fertilize until the tree or shrub has grown one full season. Prune off only dead or damaged branches.

Balled-and-Burlapped Shrubs and Trees - Dig a hole the same depth and 2-3 times wider than the existing root ball. The sides of the hole should be rough, not smooth. Prepare the soil by incorporating organic matter (compost) in two-thirds of the excavated soil. Set aside one-third of the soil to make a berm (water basin) later on. Place the plant in the center of the hole on undisturbed or compacted soil (to prevent settling). Remove or fold down as much material, wires and ties from the tree or shrub as you can. **Do not** cut the wire basket as this can compromise the root ball. Make sure the twine around the trunk and across the top of the ball is cut and removed. Sometimes the twine can be plastic and if buried it will strangle the plant. Carefully roll down the burlap from the upper one-third of the root ball. Do not remove the last of the burlap covering the bottom of the root ball until the tree or shrub is properly positioned in its hole. It is important that the root ball of the shrub or tree is not broken. Sometimes, the burlap can just be cut away from the sides and the bottom piece left intact. Be careful to pull excess soil away from the trunk of the plant (see diagram 1 & explanation) to assess correct planting depth. The original soil lines of the root ball should be at ground level. Put in soil around the root ball to fill the bottom third of the hole. Pour in a bucket of water and let it drain away. Spread more soil and lightly pack it down until the hole is 2/3 filled. Water again. Fill with soil to within an inch of the surrounding surface. Lightly pack down. Form a watering basin (berm 2"-3" tall) with the unmixed soil around the existing root ball of the tree or shrub and water again. When the water has soaked in, mulch lightly (approximately 1" deep) to cover the width of the root ball. Mulch 2" deep beyond the root ball. Staking may be beneficial for some trees. Keep the plant well watered for the first year of establishment. Avoid periods of over or under watering, try to keep the soil consistently moist.

1. In the process of digging trees and shrubs the existing soil can be accidentally mounded up and over the roots. If the excess mounded soil (2"-6") is not removed the tree or shrub will **DIE**. Planting too deep or burying plants in mulch are the #1 reasons for plant failure

2. Before putting the plant in the hole, check for root flare to make final adjustments for correct hole depth.

3. Better to plant 1"-2" too high than 1"-2" too deep.

