Plant A New Tree In Six Easy Steps

By the Bernards Township Shade Tree Commission - April 2019

Early spring and fall are a perfect time to plant new trees because of the cooler temperatures. Avoid planting in hot weather as this is stressful to the plant and will lessen your chances of success. New trees will enhance the aesthetics and value of your property. Planting a new tree in your yard is a simple task. Just follow these six easy steps.

1. After selecting the appropriate species and location for your new tree, the first step is digging an adequately sized hole. The hole should be approximately three times the diameter of the root ball and as deep as the root ball. The extra space is necessary to provide the new tree with room to extend its roots as it begins to grow in its new location.

2. Inspect the tree’s root system and ensure that tangled roots are freed and circling roots are cut and removed. If the root ball is wrapped in burlap, ensure that any wire, nails, or vinyl material holding the root ball together is removed and discarded. Cut away any excess burlap around the sides of the root ball. Removing burlap underneath the root ball is unnecessary.

3. Place your new tree in the hole and ensure that the tree is centered in the hole, upright and that the hole is deep enough so that the root flare (which is the bottom portion of the trunk that begins to flare or widen) remains just above the soil line.

4. Backfill slowly around the tree using the soil that was extracted from the hole. The soil can be enhanced with compost or soil purchased from a garden center. Gently pack the soil to be sure there aren't any air pockets. Taper the final grade to the root flare. Spread mulch over the area of new soil approximately two to three inches deep around the outer circle and diminish the amount to be very thin near the trunk.

5. It may be necessary to stake a taller tree to ensure that it remains upright while establishing a firm root system. It is recommended that two stakes be secured in the ground on opposite sides of the tree outside the diameter of the hole. Secure the tree to each stake using a flexible material, such as the rubber part of an old hose, which will not scar the tree’s bark. Remove the stakes in one year or earlier if the tree has rooted in.

6. Provide the tree with proper care to ensure that it will thrive. Generally, it is sufficient to water a newly planted tree every other day for two weeks. Provide enough water so that the soil remains moist but not soggy. Remain cognizant of weather conditions as extensive rainfall or heat will affect the amount of watering needed. You may also want to purchase a deer guard and/or deer repellent to protect the tree from deer during the early stages of its life.

By following these six simple steps, you will be well on your way to enjoying a beautiful new tree for years to come. Please visit the Bernards Township Shade Tree Commission web page for additional information.