



PLANTING A TREE

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PLANT TREES CORRECTLY

Trees that are planted incorrectly will live for a few years then start to decline and die. Healthy tree growth begins with a properly planted tree.

Photo from Nicole Stoner, Nebraska Extension Educator

WHEN TO PLANT TREES

Trees can be planted in the spring or in the fall. It is best to avoid planting during the hot part of the summer or when the ground is frozen in the winter. Arbor Day is the last Friday in April in Nebraska, so anytime around that for a spring planting is good. Anytime in September or October is best for a fall planting.

TREE SELECTION

- Choose a tree that is adapted to live in our Hardiness zone. You can find your zone at:
<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>
- Select a tree with a healthy root system, not one that is root bound.
- Consider a tree produced in a grow-bag or root-maker production system for improved root growth.
- Purchase a tree from a locally grown source.
- For good trees in Nebraska, go to:
<https://nfs.unl.edu/trees-to-plant>



Photo from Nicole Stoner, Nebraska Extension Educator

HOW TO CORRECTLY PLANT TREES

- *First, pull the rootball out and find the first lateral roots.*
- *Dig the hole just as deep as that rootball and twice as wide.*
 - *The first lateral roots should be at or just below the soil surface.*
- *Scarify or loosen the sides of the planting hole for root growth.*
- *Remove all wire, twine, ropes, tags, burlap, etc.*
- *Backfill with existing soil, don't amend the soil or use purchased topsoil.*



Photo from Sarah Browning, Nebraska Extension Educator



Photos from John Fech, Nebraska Extension Educator



WATERING NEWLY PLANTED TREES

- *Water to the point of saturation after planting to provide needed moisture to the plant.*
 - *This will also settle the soil around the rootball and eliminate air pockets.*
- *Trees should receive 1" of water per week.*
- *If rainfall isn't present, provide irrigation through drip irrigation, the hose on a slow soak, or with a sprinkler in the drip zone of the tree.*
- *May need to continue to water in the winter monthly, if natural precipitation or snow cover isn't present.*

STAKING TREES

- *Trees don't need to be staked unless they are in a very windswept location.*
- *If staking is necessary, be sure the staking equipment is loose on the tree so it can still move in the wind.*
- *Remove staking equipment after one year.*
- *Use broad, smooth materials on the tree to avoid injury. Do not use hose and wires.*
- *Use 1 or 2 stakes like the photos to the left.*



Staking injury from wires



Photo from John Fech, Nebraska Extension Educator

POST-PLANTING TREE CARE

- *Add a layer of organic mulch around each tree to help hold moisture, to combat weeds, & to prevent lawn mower blight.*
- *Mulch should only be 2-3 inches deep and should NOT be mounded up around the trunk.*
- *Can use a mesh wrap to protect from rabbit or vole damage.*
- *Can use a plastic tube to protect from sunscald, but only leave on for one winter.*