

Shade Trees**Do This!****Selection:**

Select slower growing trees (stronger wood)
Pick something new or less commonly planted in area
Buy a smaller tree (6' tall or less)
Check that roots are not root bound in container
Check that limbs are still present low on trunk

Planting:

Locate the trunk taper (flare at the trunk base) and only then should you dig the planting hole.
Dig hole just deep enough for root ball to sit on firm, undisturbed soil with trunk taper visible above ground. If clay soil, trunk taper can be 2" above ground.
Dig hole at least 6" to 12" wider than root ball.
Remove all containers, burlap, wire and string.
Backfill hole with same soil removed from the planting hole when it was dug.
As a rule, do not apply nitrogen at planting.
Keep soil moist, NOT saturated, to an 8" to 12" depth in and outside the planting hole until the soil freezes in fall and for one or two years after planting.
Place a 2" to 3" deep layer of organic mulch over the soil in at least a 4' diameter ring, and keep mulch 6" away from trunk.
Avoid pruning at planting (except to remove a double leader or broken branches). Leave lowest limbs on trunk until they are about one inch in diameter.
If needed, stake low on the tree for only one year. The crown should be able to sway with the wind.

Watering Established Trees:

In dry periods, moisten the soil around the tree 8" to 12" deep with a trickling hose or sprinkler.

Fertilizing Established Trees:

Have a basic soil test taken to know your soil.
Avoid fertilizing trees growing in lawns as they receive enough nutrients from lawn fertilization.
If needed, fertilize in spring. Avoid fertilizing trees during fall.

Don't Do This!**Selection:**

Avoid very fast growing trees (weaker, brittle wood)
Avoid same old, same old (trees overplanted in area)
Avoid larger nursery trees (8' to 10' tall or taller)
Avoid trees root bound in container with circling roots; i.e. more roots than soil in container
Avoid trees whose lower limbs have all been removed

Planting:

Don't dig planting hole BEFORE locating trunk taper.
Don't dig the hole too deep so soil beneath root ball is loosened and trunk taper is not visible above ground after planting; or, root ball settles into loose soil after planting and trunk taper ends up below ground.
Don't dig the hole only as wide as needed to insert root ball.
Don't leave wire baskets, burlap, wire or string on or around root ball.
Don't refill hole with well amended soil or compost.
Don't apply nitrogen at planting, as a rule.
Don't keep the soil saturated around root ball.
Don't use too deep (over 3 ") of a mulch layer and don't pile it against the trunk.
Don't place an inorganic weed mat in a circle around the tree and pile gravel or river rock on top.
Don't prune healthy branches at planting, especially lower limbs.
Don't stake high on tree and so tight the tree can't sway with the wind. Don't stake for longer than one year. Don't use wire or garden hose around trunk.

Watering Established Trees:

Don't rely on lawn irrigation system to water trees; especially during extended dry periods or drought.

Fertilizing Established Trees:

Don't provide extra fertilizer along with lawn fertilizer, such as using tree spikes.
Don't fertilize during fall.

Do This!

Mulching Established Trees:

Maintain at least a 4' diameter ring of organic mulch, 2" to 3" deep, over soil of tree for it's entire life.

Pruning:

Prune from late winter into early spring for most trees.

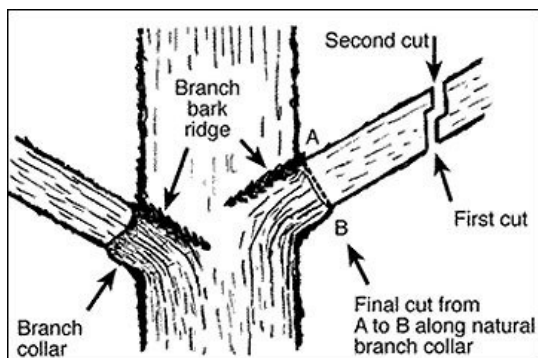
Avoid pruning from mid-August up until leaf drop. Ideally, avoid pruning November through January.

Do minimal pruning the first 3 to 5 years after planting, except to remove crisscrossing branches and branches becoming a double leader.

Leave lowest limbs on tree trunk until they reach one inch in diameter.

From 8 to 15 years after planting, focus on structural pruning to remove limbs before they turn into a problem. Hire an experienced Arborist to prune correctly.

Use sharp pruning tools and make the cut at the correct location on the branch. Leave the branch bark ridge and branch collar. Do not leave branch stubs.



Leave pruning wounds bare. Do not cover them with a wound dressing or pruning paint.

Winter/Wildlife Protection:

Wrap young, tender barked trees during winter to protect from sunscald injury.

Wait until mid to late November to wrap. Wrap from the base upwards, overlapping wrap so no part of trunk is exposed to sunlight.

Remove all wrap in late winter.

Place hardware cloth around young tree trunks in November to protect from rabbits and voles. Make sure it does not rub on the trunk and is removed in late winter.

Avoid too deep of mulch layers or mulch piled against trunk as this provides winter homes for voles.

Don't Do This!

Mulching Established Trees:

Don't allow organic mulch placed around trees to decompose so grass grows up around the trunk.

Avoid using rock or gravel as mulch.

Pruning:

Don't prune trees from mid-August through fall or during leafing in spring.

Don't prune heavily the first few years after planting; and don't prune lower limbs too soon.

Don't ignore pruning until a problem is noticed or a wind or ice storm breaks branches.

Don't prune branches flush with trunk so branch collar and bark ridge are removed. Don't leave branch stubs when pruning.

Don't top a tree.

Don't cover wounds with pruning paint or dressing.

Winter/Wildlife Protection:

Don't forget to remove hardware cloth cylinders from trunks before they rub or girdle the tree.

Don't leave wrap or other protective trunk covers on during summer.

Tree Resources



<https://go.unl.edu/careofnewlyplantedtrees>

<https://go.unl.edu/treesinhomeandscape>



<https://go.unl.edu/needtofertilize>