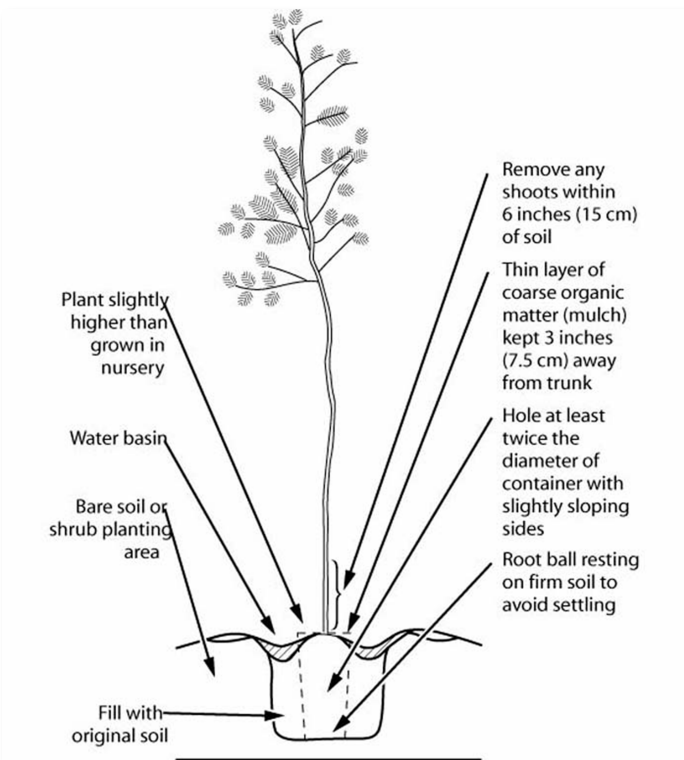


## Planting Landscape Trees



This is one article in a series about landscape trees; the most recent article addressed selecting trees at the nursery. This article will discuss tree planting.

The spring and fall months are usually the best times to plant trees. Weather conditions are typically moderate, enabling plants to avoid heat or cold stress while they are establishing new root systems.

**Digging the Hole:** plant the tree “high”. Dig the hole to a depth about 2 inches less than that of the soil in the container or root ball. Planting more deeply or in loose soil that can settle with time, causing the plant to be deeper than intended, may lead to future problems such as crown rot. The width of the hole should be a minimum of twice the diameter of the container or root ball. The wider the hole, the faster the roots will grow out of the root ball and into surrounding soil.

**Backfill:** remove the tree from the container and remove any stakes that were attached to the tree in the container. Place the plant’s root ball so that it rests firmly on the undug bottom of the hole. Backfill around the root ball with soil dug from the hole, being sure to water the soil thoroughly to remove air

pockets. Recent studies have shown that nothing is gained by amending the backfill with organic matter, fertilizer, or other substances. In fact, the practice could be harmful. Construct a water basin that is initially the same diameter as the root ball. Gradually widen the basin as the plant becomes established. Remove it completely after the first growing season.

**Mulching and Irrigation:** after planting, add a layer of coarse organic material such as a mulch and irrigate thoroughly to settle the soil. Keep the mulch 3 inches away from the trunk.

The original root ball must not be allowed to become completely dry for any extended period during tree establishment. As the plant becomes established, irrigations can become less frequent but deeper.

**Plants in Lawns:** If plants are installed in lawns, keep the grass well away from the trunk of the new plant for 2 to 4 years to reduce competition from the grass for water and nutrients. Keeping the ground free of other plant growth at least 12 inches in all directions from the trunk also prevents damage from mowers, hedgers, and weed eaters.

**Staking:** there is little need to stake trees for trunk support if they were grown properly with adequate space in the nursery. If newly planted trees will not stand upright without support or if frequent, heavy winds are a problem, staking may be necessary.

For more information contact the UC Master Gardeners of Glenn County at 865-1107, or stop by our weekly plant clinic at the Cooperative Extension office at 821 E. South Street in Orland, Wednesdays 2 - 4 PM.

Submitted by: Nancy Mulligan, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County