

## Go Plant a Tree

The fall and early winter through March is an ideal time of year to plant a new tree in your landscape as long as the ground is not frozen. Fall planting will allow a stress-free transition for a new tree allowing it withstand the harsh summer. Now is also a great time to take advantage of sales at your local garden center, as most people aren't thinking about planting trees.

Typically, trees are available in three different packages. These include containers, balled and burlapped, and bare root, with the first two being more common. The container tree, which has all of its root system intact, is the most tolerant of the transplanting process. The balled and burlapped tree has only 5% of its original root system, according to Dr. Wayne Clatterbuck, UT Extension Forestry Specialist, and the bare root tree has even less.

After purchasing a new tree, you should be careful to not injure its trunk. You should try to avoid carrying a tree by the trunk. The root system of a bare root tree will be especially vulnerable to injury.

A tree's chances of surviving in the landscape greatly depend on the care and attention given to the tree during the planting process. First of all, a tree should not be planted any deeper than it was growing in the nursery. Larger trees will settle due to their weight. Some plants such as azaleas will even benefit from being planted in a raised bed. Preferably, the planting hole should be three times the diameter of the root ball. If you're planting a balled and burlapped tree, make sure you remove the burlap and wire from the sides of the plant. It is OK to leave the burlap in the bottom of the hole.

If you're planting a container tree, make sure you score the root ball to discourage circling roots and encourage roots to grow outward. If you're planting a bare root tree, make sure you spread the roots before you begin backfilling.

You will want to backfill the hole with the original soil. Gently pack the soil to remove air pockets as you fill the hole. Thoroughly water the tree after filling half of the hole and after the tree is planted.

Finally, you will need to apply 2 to 3 inches of mulch around the tree, making sure that the mulch doesn't touch the trunk. If you apply mulch next the trunk, this will encourage disease and insect problems for the tree. Make sure to monitor soil moisture during its two-year establishment period.