

## Planting and Potting New Trees

Many of you picked up tree seedlings during Tennessee Tree Day or for Arbor Day celebrations so let's look at two options you have to give your trees a good start. You can plant them now in their permanent place in the yard or maintain them in a pot before planting them in the ground.

### Planting

Until you are ready to plant, keep your seedling damp in the shipping bag/container and out of the sun and wind as these conditions will harm the roots.

You need to plan carefully when and where you will plant your tree. Consider where this tree will be in 20 years. Do your research based on what kind of tree it is. How tall and will it get through maturity? How broad will the roots spread? Will the limbs of the tree be a problem for your roof in the future? Will the roots damage septic or water lines? Large trees do not belong near your home's foundation or under any power line. Before you dig the hole for your tree, call 811 to have someone come out to mark where your underground utilities are buried. This call to 811 could save you a damaged water or gas line, internet outage, property damage, or personal injury. It's free, it's easy, and it's the law to have this service completed before digging.

Now let's plant your tree. Wait for a cool day (35-75F degrees) in the fall or early spring to plant the tree. Remember that heat can damage roots, even after you plant. Dig the hole deep enough so it will accommodate the vertical root and wide enough to not crowd the side roots of the tree. Use the soil that you dug out for back filling when you are finished. A thin layer of mulch or compost will help water get to the root system. Don't pack the dirt down when you are done. Roots of the growing tree need some air, but not a lot. You may be tempted to use some growth encouragement fertilizer. If you do use fertilizer, use very sparingly, and follow the directions on the label. Too much fertilizer will burn the tender roots and may kill your seedling. Don't overwater either, just dampen when the soil on top gets dry. Too much water will encourage root rot. Typically, young trees are established in two years.

### Potting

If you choose to put your seedling in a pot until you are ready to plant it in its permanent home, prepare the pot with soil from that location if possible. Use a large pot so the roots will be able to grow and flourish. Follow the same guidelines for ground planting when fertilizing and watering. When using growth enhancement fertilizer, use it very sparingly, and follow the directions on the label. Too much fertilizer will burn the tender roots and may kill your seedling. Don't overwater, dampening when the soil on top gets dry. Too much water encourages root rot. Let your potted seedling get some morning sun and don't expose it to full sun until well established.

Again, do some research on your variety of tree to keep it in good health as it grows the first year.

If you would like more details on tree planting, please visit the UT/TSU Extension website: <https://uthort.tennessee.edu/> or <https://utextension.tennessee.edu/>, for more information.

Good luck with your new trees!

## The Master Gardeners of Northeast Tennessee