

# Tri-County/City Soil & Water Conservation District

## How to Plant Seedlings

1. Dig a hole wide and deep enough to cover the root system.
2. Handle seedlings by the base of the stem, taking care not to bruise the bark.
3. Lay the roots straight down the hole in a natural arrangement. Do not bunch, spiral, double-over or bend roots.
4. Keep stones and twigs out of the hole (they create air pockets that dry out roots).
5. Plant seedlings slightly above the root collar swelling.
6. Cover with soil. Do not bury live branches or foliage, or leave any roots exposed to the air.
7. Tamp soil firmly with toe (not the heel) to remove air pockets.
8. Create a mulched area around the tree that is 50% than the spread of the branches and about 3 inches deep. Wood chips or shredded pine or cedar bark are great mulch, as are oak leaves and pine needles.
9. Water seedlings after planting.
10. To prevent damage to the roots, only carry as many seedlings as you can plant in ten minutes. Keep the remaining seedlings in the shade, the roots covered and moist until you are ready to plant them.



## Can't Plant Right Away? Pot Your Seedlings.

If you are unable to plant your seedlings in the ground for several days or more, you can pot them. Remember ... Do not submerge root systems in water longer than six hours as this can kill the seedlings. Potted seedlings will use this time to get hardier and should be quite happy on your porch or patio for a time.

Select a pot deep enough for seedling roots to fit into without being bent or broken. Hold your tree in the pot and carefully fill the pot with good soil. Then pack the soil firmly around the roots.

After your seedling is planted, don't just forget it. It is important to water young trees during the summer months. Place potted seedlings in a place where they will have protection from the wind and receive appropriate light for the species. Then, when you have time or even after the weather cools, put your seedlings in the ground.

## Follow These Guidelines for Seedling Survival

After you receive your seedlings, their best chance for survival is to give them "tender loving care" from the time you pick them up from the sale site until you plant them.

- Do not allow seedlings to dry out. Ample moisture is the key factor in seedling survival; seedlings must never be allowed to dry out from the nursery to planting to established stand in the field. Remember "if they dry, they die."
- Transport seedlings carefully. Rough handling can damage root systems and predispose seedlings to stress.
- Avoid temperature extremes. Fluctuations in temperature, especially excessive heat, during storage and transport can result in seedling trauma during outplanting.
- Plant promptly. Once seedlings are lifted, minimize storage time, especially early in the season and avoid extended transport time.
- Do not trim or prune seedling roots. Seedlings need every single tiny root to absorb moisture and nutrients from the ground. The more root surface, the better the growth.
- Do not wash or shake gel from seedling roots. Gel applied to roots at the nursery prevents drying out during transport, decreases planting shock, and improves acclimation to the planting site.
- Plant bareroot seedlings after October, preferably after December 15 and before mid-April if possible. Cooler temperatures are more conducive to seedling survival and healthy growth.
- Plant seedlings deeply. Greater exposure to the soil and its water content - even one-half inch of added depth of planting - significantly improves survival rates.

## Great Grandma's Method for Keeping Palms

Ever wonder why grandmothers always had a green thumb for potted palm trees? This very old note found among recipe notes just may be why. Note reads: *If you want your palms to thrive in an ordinary sitting-room, sponge the leaves once a week with lukewarm water, to which a little milk has been added. Then stand the plant for two hours in lukewarm water deep enough to completely cover the pot. This is the proper way to water palms.*

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