

Planting Bare Root Trees – a guide prepared by [Sustainable Saratoga](http://SustainableSaratoga.org)

**CRITICAL: Don't plant the tree too deep.
Never cover the root flare with soil.**

Bring the **RIGHT TOOLS**

BE GENTLE with the roots and trunk.

Dig a **WIDE & SHALLOW HOLE**
(**about 1 foot deep; 4 feet wide**)

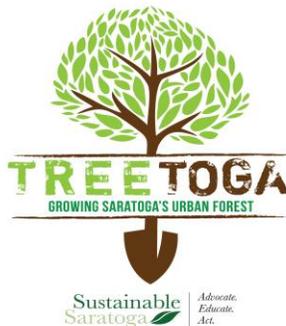
Set stakes before setting the tree.

Set the tree straight & NOT TOO DEEP !!

Get **Lead Planter's approval** before filling hole



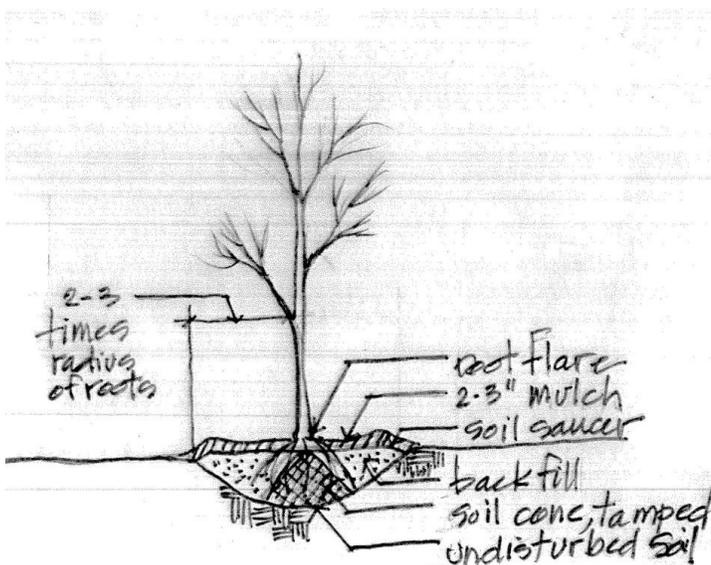
Root flare correctly placed above soil



Bring the RIGHT TOOLS (each crew should have):

- Planting instructions (*please print this sheet*)
- Round-point shovel, rake, small sledge hammer or rubber mallet (for stake), pruning shears, pocket knife, measuring tape
- Work gloves and boots
- Tarp (*for the soil that you dig up*)
- Water (*bring some in gallon jugs; you may not find it on site*)
- Stake and tie material (*we will provide*)

Examine your tree. Prune any dead and broken branches. Leave the roots in their protective plastic wrapping until your planting hole is ready. Look for an on-site water source.



Prepare a wide, shallow hole for planting.

The hole for the tree should be wide and shallow, **about one foot deep and three times the width of the root spread.**

Remove all turf first and set aside for disposal (competes for water with the tree). Dig the hole and place the soil on the tarp to protect the lawn. **Do not dig too deeply**; instead digging a wide hole helps roots to spread.

Create a small mound in the center of the hole to **support the tree at the proper height**. Tamp this mound to prevent settling.

Staking: set stakes before you set the tree.

Staking protects the tree from vandalism and tipping in the wind. After digging the hole, set two stakes about one foot apart near the center of the hole, one on the north side and one on the south side. Drive stakes one foot below the bottom of the hole (2 feet below ground level). If you don't have a small sledge hammer, dig a narrow hole with a shovel and "plant" the stake, tamping the soil very firmly around it with the handle of your shovel. When finished, make sure there is a mound for supporting the tree at the center of the hole. (For planting instructions, see next step.)

After planting, attach each stake to the tree with the tie material. Tie in a figure 8 around trunk and stake. Remove staking next spring.

STAKING:



Proper staking of a bare root tree

Set the tree straight & NOT TOO DEEP!!

Stand the tree between the stakes. **Gently** spread the roots laterally in all directions, working them around the stakes and perhaps roots from nearby trees. Make sure the tree is straight (observe from all angles). Finally, **adjust height**. It is **critical that the root flare is visible above the soil level**. Lay your rake handle level across the hole to see where the root flare will meet the ground. **Adjust the mound** under the roots to change the depth. Better to plant the tree too high than too deep.

Backfilling

When you've set the tree plumb and at the right depth, fill the hole **halfway** with the soil that was removed. **Be gentle with the delicate roots. Pack soil with your hands, not your feet.** At this point, pour water into the hole (to remove air pockets) and tamp the soil **gently** with the handle end of your shovel. Continue to backfill the hole, tamping **gently** as you go. After filling the hole, create a saucer with the soil at the outer edges of the roots. This will help concentrate the water over the roots. **Water well.** Be sure the root flare is still visible above the soil. Rake the lawn clean of dirt.

Mulching (*we encourage hosts to provide a supply*)

Mulch helps keep the roots cool, retains soil moisture longer and suppresses weeds. Mulch the entire area with shredded bark mulch 3 inches deep. Keep the mulch away from the trunk of the tree. A handy rule of thumb for mulch is the **3-3-3 method; 3" deep, 3" from the trunk, and a radius of 3 feet**. Never pile mulch against the tree trunk in a "mulch volcano," as it may promote fungal growth by holding moisture against the trunk.

DON'T kill trees with a "Mulch Volcano"



Watering and Maintenance: Guide for Tree Host

Watering is the most critical step to help your young tree survive and thrive. Ideally your tree should receive an inch of water per week. If nature doesn't provide, give your tree 10 gallons of water every two to three days to prevent the roots from drying out. Keep mulch around the tree using the 3-3-3 rule. Remove staking after one year.