

TREE PLANTING TIPS

The ideal time to plant a tree is during the rainy season, in the tropics and subtropics, or the dormant season, in temperate zones, after leaf drop or before bud break. Trees that have been well cared for in a nursery can be planted throughout the growing season.

Proper handling during planting is essential to ensure healthy growth. Proper site preparation before and during planting, coupled with good follow-up care, allows the seedlings to quickly establish roots in the new location and overcome what is known as transplant shock, a phenomenon that can slow the growth and reduce the vigour of the tree.

Seeds can be sown in seed beds or seedling containers (preferably biodegradable) prepared with a mixture of sand, compost and soil. The plants will need watering before and after germination. Reduce the frequency of watering as the seedlings grow. Shade the seedlings and gradually reduce the shade as they grow.

If you decide to plant seeds, collect them from an area that enjoys similar climatic conditions to where the trees will be planted. Collect the seeds from a number of healthy mature trees.

To plant a tree :

1. Dig a hole at least twice the width of the root ball to allow the roots to spread out. Remove the tree from its container, carefully cut off broken roots, and slightly loosen the root ball.
2. Place the tree in the planting hole. Always lift the tree by the root ball and never by the trunk. Spread periphery roots outwards. Avoid planting the tree too deep. Make sure that the soil line of the young tree is higher than the surface of the surrounding hole.
3. Shovel some soil into the planting hole. Check the planting depth and adjust if needed. Confirm that the tree is straight. Fill the hole gently but firmly. Pat the soil around the base of the root ball.
4. It is not recommended to apply fertilizer at the time of planting. Water the seedling thoroughly with a slow stream of water to settle the soil. Do not stake the tree. The sooner the tree can stand alone, the sooner it will become strong.
5. Provide follow up care. Protect the tree from pests and diseases by removing plants nearby which are likely to affect it. Remove weeds as they will compete with tree roots for moisture and nutrients. Protect the tree from destruction by livestock.
6. If suitable, space trees well to avoid competition for air and soil nutrients, and to encourage the growth of branches. Watch out for drought conditions and provide water if needed, especially during the first few months. Watch out for yellowing of leaves. Always maintain good air circulation in the tree by pruning to avoid pests and other diseases.

**Contact an arborist or a nearby environmental non-governmental organization
for advice on caring for your tree.**

For further information consult the following web sites:

<http://www.greenbeltmovement.org>

<http://www.worldagroforestrycentre.org>

<http://www.tree-planting.com/tree-planting-4.htm>

<http://www.plant-a-tree-today.org/home.asp>

