



# PLANTING A TREE IN YOUR YARD

## 1 CHOOSING A TREE

Whenever possible, choose a tree species that is native to this part of Ontario as it will be better adapted to the local growing conditions and provide habitat for wildlife (birds, insects, small mammals). The GUFF website page Resources and Links includes information on Small and Medium-Large Native Trees that are suitable for Guelph yards (<https://guffguelph.ca/resources-and-links>).



## 2 BEST TIME TO PLANT YOUR TREE

The ideal time to plant your tree is early spring (late May-early June), when frost is no longer a danger and before the hot weather of summer. Alternatively plant in the fall (mid-September to mid-October).

## 3 CHOSE YOUR PLANTING LOCATION

Consider the space above and below to ensure that there will be room for your tree. What are the soil and light conditions? Be sure to select a species of tree that is suitable for the conditions of the location you have in mind.

## 4 DIG THE PLANTING HOLE

The hole cannot be too wide, but it can be too deep. Measure the root ball and dig a hole at least 12 cm larger than the root ball on all sides. This allows the growing roots to more easily establish themselves. Before determining the depth of the hole, find the point where the tree trunk widens to become the major roots (trunk flare). Dig the hole only as deep as is needed to plant the trunk flare at grade.



## 5 PLACE THE TREE AND FILL IN

Loosen any exposed roots that seem crowded with either a knife or your fingers. Position the tree in the hole making sure it is centered and straight. To fill in the hole use the soil that was removed from the planting hole. You can add some compost, bonemeal, or high phosphorous transplant fertilizer at this point but you want the soil in the hole to be much the same in composition as that surrounding the hole. To settle the soil in the hole and remove air pockets, gradually add the soil while watering the root ball and the surrounding soil. Gently tamp the finished layer of soil but avoid compacting it.



## 6 WATERING YOUR TREE

The first 3 years, and especially the first growing season, are critical for the growth and survival of your tree and it is important that it receives adequate moisture during this time. It takes several weeks after planting for the roots to extend beyond the original soil ball so be sure to check this area regularly as it often dries out before the surrounding soil. Deep watering encourages a deep root system, making the tree more drought tolerant. Regular deep soakings are better than frequent light wettings. Water the tree once or twice a week for the first month after planting unless there is regular and significant rainfall. Thereafter the tree should be checked regularly and watered as necessary, especially if there is a prolonged drought.



## 7 APPLYING ORGANIC MULCH

Apply organic mulch (5 to 10 cm layer) around the base of your tree. Leave a bare 7 cm diameter circle around the trunk itself. Mulching your tree will help to hold moisture in the soil, reduce competition from other plants and protect the soil from severe temperatures.



For more information on caring for your tree over the long-term, please go to our website for a copy of the handout on Tree Care and Maintenance <https://guffguelph.ca/resources-and-links>

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