

## BEFORE YOU PLANT A TREE

**Site Selection-** Consider soil health, sunlight, overhead obstructions.

**Species Selection-** Please visit the Division of Community Forestry website for standards.

**Call Kentucky 811 Before You Dig-** Have BUD mark underground utilities to prevent accidents.

## PLANTING IN THE PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

**Permits-** Please visit the Division of Community Forestry website for permits. Permits must be obtained for plantings in the public right of way.

## 3 YEAR WATERING REGIMEN

Scheduled watering should take place at the time of planting, and for the next three years after the tree is planted. Water slowly and evenly across the root zone. Water bags are recommended.

**At time of planting:** After a tree has been properly planted, it needs to be watered immediately.

**Year 1:** The first year that the tree is in the ground, it needs to be watered once a week. Enough water should be applied so that the tree receives the equivalent of one (1) inch of rainfall weekly\* when temperatures are in the high 70s (°F) and above\*\*. The watering schedule should start approximately in May and conclude in October as the trees enter into dormancy for the winter months.

**Year 2:** Water the tree every other week from May through October, or when temperatures are in the high 70s (°F) and above.

**Year 3:** Water the tree once a month from May through October, or when temperatures are in the high 70s (°F) and above.

*\*If a rainfall event produces one (1) inch or more of rainfall, there is no need to water the tree. Over watering can damage the tree. One can test the soil moisture levels adjacent to the root zone by digging at a depth of two (2) inches, then feel for moisture.*

*\*\*Adjust timing if hot weather starts or ends early.*



**URBAN FORESTRY**  
Louisville Parks and Recreation

September 2022

## HOW TO GUIDE: ON PLANTING A CONTAINER TREE



**URBAN FORESTRY**

Louisville Parks and Recreation

9300 Whipps Mill Road

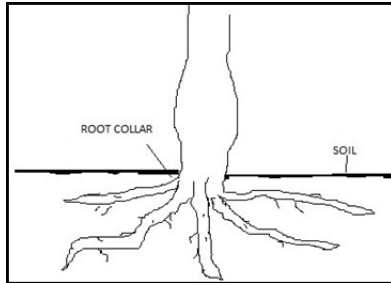
Louisville, KY 40202

502-574-7275

<https://louisvilleky.gov/government/urban-forestry>

1. **DIGGING**- Depth of the hole shall be equal to the depth of the root ball measured from the **root collar** \* to the bottom of the root ball. Root collar should be planted at final grade. The width of the hole shall be a minimum of 2 times the root ball diameter. The sides of the hole need to be sloped and loose (scar the sides to deter compaction).

\*A tree's **root collar** is the point where top-most root(s) emerges from the trunk. In container trees the root collar should be located within 2 inches from the top of the root ball. All excess soil needs to be removed from top of root ball.



**Trick:** Use a spade or shovel to measure the diameter and depth of the hole.

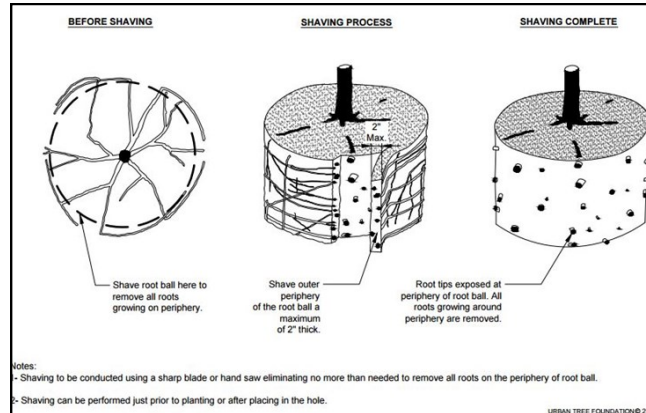
2. Place tarp adjacent to the location of the predetermined hole. Using a spade, remove the sod from the hole in wedges. Insert the spade deep enough to get under the grass's root system. Use the spade horizontally under the grass to sever the attaching root system and cut away each piece.

3. Remove soil to make hole, and place soil next to sod pieces on tarp. Break up any large clumps during removal. The shape of your hole should be that of a saucer, meaning sloped sides with the greatest depth in the center.

4. Verify that the hole is the correct depth and scarify or roughen the walls of the hole to avoid soil compaction from the shovel. Use spade, shovel or measuring tape to verify depth of hole.

**Note:** Always handle the tree by the root ball, never by the trunk or crown.

5. **PLANTING**— Remove roping and ties from the crown of the tree. Gently remove the container. Tap the outside or roll the container to loosen. Remove any excess soil to expose root collar. If roots are matted shave the outer periphery of the root ball a maximum of 2 inches thick. Roll tree into hole.



**Directionality**- Check from four cardinal directions that the tree is correctly oriented. If planting on street make sure dominate branches are oriented parallel with the street.

**Excess soil**- Remove excess soil from the top of the root ball to the point that the fine root hairs are just visible. Make any corrections to root ball if girdling roots are visible.

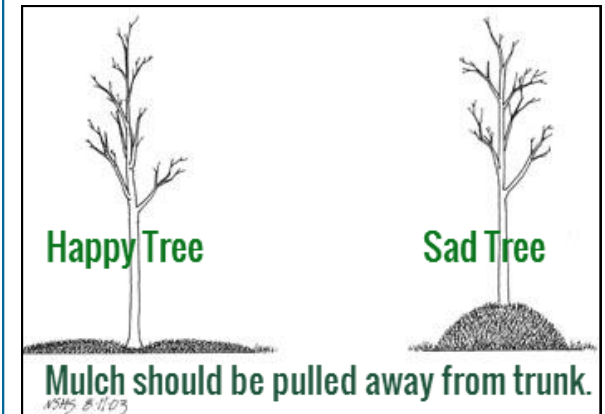
**Straightness of the trunk**- To make sure a tree is planted straight look at the trunk from the root collar to 3 feet up from the root collar. Look at this trunk zone in four cardinal directions. Do not look at tree crown to determine straightness of tree trunk.

6. **BACKFILL**- Backfill the hole with soil from the tarp. Fill the hole at intervals (around 6 inches of soil), gently patting down the soil adjacent to the root ball to encourage stability. Do not step on root ball. If still present, break up any large chunks of soil. Use the tip of the shovel to gently stab the soil reducing air pockets. Never compact the soil.

7. **BERM**- Create a circular soil berm 4 inches high and 8 inches wide. The berm should be located along the outside perimeter of the hole. If sod is dug in creation of the hole and remains in excess, The Division of Community Forestry recommends using sod as base for berm. Flip sod over so grass is facing the ground, and then cover with excess soil. Compact sides of berm.

8. **WATER**- Slowly add 20 gallons of water. It is best to water at time of initial planting prior to mulching in case the tree shifts and needs to be straightened.

9. **MULCH**- Apply mulch at a depth of 2-4 inches across the diameter of the hole or drip line. Do not apply mulch to the base of trunk (root collar)—leave 1/2 inch of space between the base of the trunk and the start of the mulch.



10. **STAKE**- Not all trees need to be staked, only stake if conditions such as high winds or poor growth structure call for staking. If staking is necessary use three (3) poles that are oriented in a triangle formation around the tree. Use tree tie webbing; do not use a metal material to attach the poles to the tree.