

FRUIT TREE PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

PLANTING IN THE GROUND

CHOOSING A SITE FOR YOUR FRUIT TREE

Carefully choose a site that receives several hours of sunlight each day and has good drainage. If possible, avoid planting in a lawn because grass competes with trees for water and nutrients. If you can only plant in a lawn, remove grass around the tree in a two to three foot wide circle and keep the area mulched. Plant the tree away from lawn sprinklers or redirect them so the spray does not hit the tree. Constant moisture on bark and leaves can cause diseases.

PLANTING A BARE-ROOT TREE

PREPARING THE TREE

- Cut off any broken or diseased roots (slimy, decaying or drastically different in color).
- Soak tree roots in a bucket of water overnight.

PREPARING THE HOLE

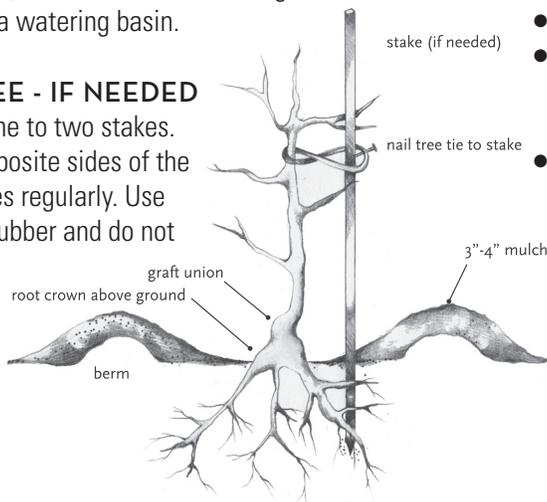
- Dig a hole twice as wide, but only as deep as the roots. Do not dig the hole deeper than the roots. Make sure the hole is wide enough to hold the roots without bending or cramping them.

PLANTING THE TREE

- Place the tree in the hole and spread the roots so they radiate out from the trunk. Align the root crown - the flare at the base of the trunk where the roots emerge - with the top of the soil line. Make sure the graft union (see diagram) is at least two to three inches above the ground.
- Settle the soil around the roots by slowly pouring two gallons of water into the hole
- While the water is soaking in finish filling the hole with soil and lightly compress the soil around the roots with your fingers. Finish watering with two more gallons. Note: Don't forget to use your bucket water from soaking the tree overnight.
- If you've buried it too deep, grab the tree trunk and pull it up and down gently while raising it to the right level.
- Build a ridge (or "berm") of soil about 4 inches high around the planting hole to make a watering basin.

STAKING YOUR TREE - IF NEEDED

- Stake your tree with one to two stakes.
- Align the stakes on opposite sides of the tree. Check the tree ties regularly. Use soft tree ties such as rubber and do not make them too tight. Do not use wire.
- Ideally the tree will be strong enough to have stakes removed after the first year.



PLANTING A TREE FROM A SMALL POT

PREPARING THE HOLE

- Dig a hole twice as wide, but only as deep as the rootball.
- Measure the rootball of your tree by placing a shovel handle or stake beside the pot. Mark on your measuring stick with your finger where the trunk flares out at the base and the roots are starting to emerge (the root crown). This will be the top of the soil line.

PLANTING THE TREE

- Hit the sides of the pot to loosen the rootball from the pot. Pull the tree out by holding the pot upside-down or on its side (depending on the tree size!) and guide the tree out of the pot.
- Place the tree in the hole making sure that the root crown is aligned with the top of the soil surface. Do not bury it, or else the trunk will rot.
- Put the soil back in the hole around the rootball, tamping it down with your shovel handle.
- Settle the soil around the rootball by slowly pouring in four gallons of water.
- If you've buried it too deep, use your shovel to lift the root ball and put some soil under it.
- Build a ridge (or "berm") of soil about 4 inches high around the planting hole to make a watering basin.

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ON-GOING CARE FOR FRUIT TREES PLANTED IN THE GROUND

WATER

Fill the watering basin when the top one to two inches of soil dries out. The tree will need more water after it starts to leaf out and in warm weather. Water the tree deeply and not very often – you may have to water once or twice a week in the summer.

PROTECTION

Young fruit trees are brittle and easily broken. If the tree is planted near where children or dogs play, pound a few sticks in the ground on the outside of the watering basin. Stretch string between the sticks as a reminder to watch out for the tree.

MULCH

Mulch is an organic material such as wood chips, bark or compost. Mulch is used to keep out weeds, insulate the roots from cold and heat, prevent the soil from drying out and to prevent a hard soil crust from forming. Spread a three to four inch layer, covering the tree's watering basin, but leaving a bare three inch circle immediately around the trunk. Mulch piled against the trunk will rot the trunk.

FERTILIZE

Add compost or other organic fertilizers in late winter to early spring and as needed. Do not fertilize in the late fall.

PRUNING

Fruit trees need pruning to remove damaged branches, provide good structure and maintain good health and fruit production. Your new tree just received its first pruning, so no immediate pruning is needed.

A newly planted fruit tree needs pruning for the first few years to help it grow into a well-structured tree. A new tree needs to be pruned so that its branches are spaced six to eight inches apart vertically, allowing them to grow out from different sides of the trunk and produce a well-balanced tree. As the tree matures branches can be 18" apart vertically.

Peaches, nectarines, and apricots need a lot of pruning to produce a substantial harvest. Fig, plum, apple and pear trees need less pruning to produce fruit, and citrus and avocados need only a little pruning. Apple and pear trees have some very short (less than six inches long) branches. These are called spurs or fruiting spurs. Do not cut off these short branches unless they are broken. These are the branches that produce the fruit. For all fruit trees, air circulation, sunlight and horizontal branching are needed for good fruit production. Remove crossing branches or branches forming a

(Pruning Continued)

narrow crotch (smaller than 45°) between trunk and branch. Another remedy for a narrow crotch is to place a stick between branch and trunk, thus increasing the angle. Branches should have attachment angles between 45° and 90° (horizontal). Branches bending below horizontal will have reduced or no fruit production.

Cut an overly tall top or too long branches, cutting back to just above an outward facing bud. This causes the branch to thicken and become stronger rather than being long, thin and unable to hold the weight of fruit or other branches.

FRUIT THINNING

Your tree may have some fruit the first year. The best thing to do is to remove the first fruit so the tree can put all of its strength into growing branches and roots. If you can't bear to remove your entire first crop, remove some of the fruit. In coming years you can leave more on the tree, but fruit should definitely be thinned if you want larger and juicier fruit.

Fruit trees typically drop some of their fruit in the month of June, so thin fruit after the "June Drop." Thinning should happen when fruit is about the size of a quarter. An apple tree shouldn't have more than one to two apples on each fruiting spur. Apricot, peach, nectarine, and plum fruits should be about three to four inches apart.

TREEPEOPLE FRUIT TREE WORKSHOPS

TreePeople offers two free workshops to help you care for your new trees. Please check our online calendar for upcoming dates at www.treepeople.org.

*Fruit Tree Pruning – offered in winter (February) and summer
Fruit Tree Care - offered in spring and fall*

HOW IS IT GOING?

We would love to hear from you with any questions, comments, or experiences. Contact Steve Hofvendahl at (818) 623-4865 or shofvendahl@treepeople.org.

