

Tree planting and care tips

- Dig a square hole, roughly one and a half times the size of the bag the plant is in.
- Put some good compost (the compost should not stink) mixed with a couple of handfuls of bonemeal at the bottom of the hole, mix it into the soil there and stamp it down firmly.
- Place the plant, still in the bag, in the hole, just to make sure that it's not too shallow or too deep – the soil at the top of the bag should be about 2cm below the top of the hole.
- Water the hole well and then remove the plant bag from the plant, taking care not to disturb or break any roots. Place it gently into the hole, turning it until you are satisfied that the plant is facing the right way and looks nice and straight.
- If you need to stake the plant, place the stakes on either side of the root ball in the hole and hammer them into the ground so that the stakes are nice and firm in the soil.
- Make the mix of soil that goes back in around the plant a mix of half compost, half soil with a couple of handfuls of bonemeal mixed in as well.
- Place a few spade-fulls of the soil mix around the plant and then stamp it down with the handle of the spade, or anything else that will do the job. Repeat this process until the soil mix is almost at the top of the hole, and nice and firm. Be careful not to cover the stem of the plant above it's existing soil level as this can lead to rot.
- Use any excess soil to build a small 'wall' around the plant to prevent water running off and not soaking in.
- If using stakes, tie the plant to them with something that will not cut into the stem or chafe the plant. Don't tie it too tightly either.
- Water your plant well.

If you rely on an irrigation system to water your garden each day, make a point at least twice a week of walking around your garden to ensure that all areas are getting enough water and that there aren't any sprinklers that are not working or not coming on.

During the windy and hot summer months, make sure that your irrigation is watering often enough, and long enough. Try not to water your garden between 10am and 4pm as the water dissipates too quickly in the heat of the sun. Put a layer of mulch around trees and in flowerbeds to prevent them from drying out too quickly.

If in doubt as to whether your plants are getting enough water, or even too much (especially in pots) scratch in the surface soil to a depth of about 6cm to 10cm and see how wet or dry the soil is and adjust your watering accordingly.

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