

HOW TO PLANT A TREE

STEP 1 Choose a Healthy Tree



Pick a strong tree from the nursery.

Look for:

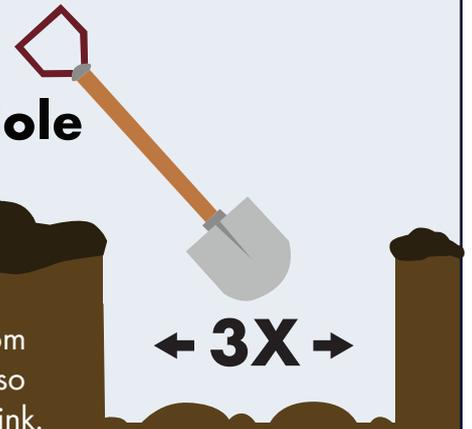
- Straight roots
- Good branch structure for its species
- A sturdy trunk that gets thicker at the base

Avoid:

- Trees with roots that wrap around the trunk

The root collar (where roots meet the trunk) should be in the top 2" of the root ball.

STEP 2 Dig the Hole



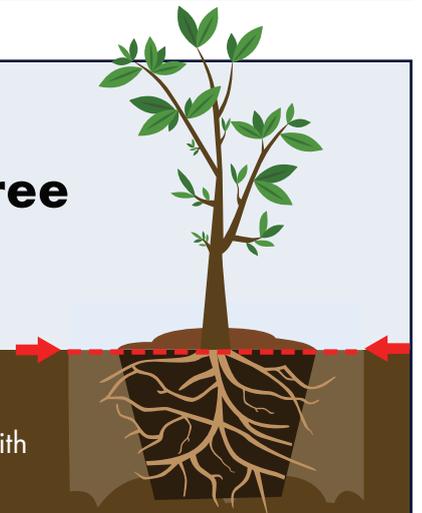
- Make the bottom of the hole flat so the tree won't sink.
- Loosen soil around the hole about 3X wider than the root ball to help roots grow faster.
- **Depth:** dig only deep enough so the root collar sits level with the ground.

STEP 3 Prepare the Roots



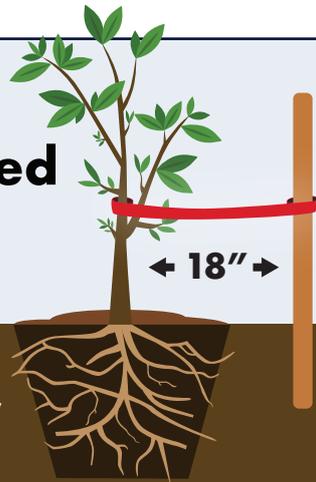
- Remove soil and any roots that grow over the root collar.
- Fix or trim large, circling roots before planting so they grow outward.
- Thoroughly loosen the root ball with your hands and straighten out flexible small roots.

STEP 4 Plant the Tree



- Place the tree so the root collar is level with the soil surface.
- Refill the hole using the same soil you removed.
- Gently press the soil and water to remove air pockets.
- Build a small soil berm (~4" tall) around the root ball to hold water near the roots. Enlarge it as the tree grows.

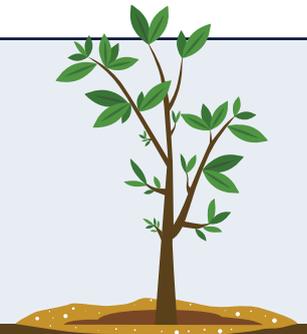
STEP 5 Stake if Needed



Stakes help keep the tree straight while the roots anchor, it from damage.

- Remove the nursery stake.
- Place a new stake 18" from the trunk.
- Tie the trunk where the tree stands upright.
- Use a second stake if the upper trunk needs additional support.
- Secure ties in loose loops around the trunk to allow slight movement with wind.
- Remove stakes and ties after the tree is established.

STEP 6 Mulch



Add a 3–4 inch layer of mulch (wood chips or shredded bark) in a donut shape around the tree. Keep mulch 4" away from the trunk to avoid decay.

Mulch helps:

- Hold moisture
- Add organic material to the soil
- Protect roots from temperature changes
- Reduce grass competition
- Prevent mower damage

Refresh mulch yearly as it breaks down.

STEP 8 Water



First year: Water 2–3 times a week. Use about 3 gallons per inch of trunk diameter.

Second year: Water weekly.

Third year: Water every two weeks.

After that: Water as needed based on tree type, soil, and climate.

Check irrigation systems for leaks regularly.

*** Pro Tip:** Drill a small hole at the base of a 5 gallon bucket and place next to the tree. Fill when needed.

STEP 7 Prune



Begin structural pruning one year after planting, during the winter.

- Reduce stems that compete with the main trunk (central leader).
- Remove dead, dying, or diseased branches.
- Remove crossing branches.
- Remove shoots growing from the base of the tree.

This helps the tree grow strong and healthy.

GROWING A GREENER CALIFORNIA

