



What to do about....

Planting Trees

Tips for a Successful Start

Have you picked your planting site and tree and shrub species? Check our fact Sheet “What to do About Choosing Tree Species” to help you pick the best location and species. Once you have made your choices it’s time to prepare the planting site. Be sure your utilities are marked before you begin. (Call 811 to have them located for you.) Keep the root mass moist until the tree is planted and don’t plant when the soil is excessively wet or frozen.

Measure your pot and dig the sod away at least twice the diameter of the pot. Your hole will need to be this wide. Dig the hole deep enough so that the soil line in the pot is the same as the ground elevation. You can mix compost in with the soil to give the plant extra nutrients.

Cut the pot and remove the tree. Loosen the roots and prune any spiraling roots. This is important to prevent spiraling roots from girdling the tree. Place the tree in the hole so that the root collar is no deeper or slightly above ground level. Also be sure the tree or shrub’s main stem is vertical.

Backfill loose soil around the root mass, gently firming and watering while you fill to eliminate air pockets. Create a saucer around the outer edge of the planting hole to catch rainwater and make it easier to water. This will also help with settling the soil. You can mulch around the tree with composted leaves, grass clippings or shredded wood mulch. Don’t put on more than 3 inches of mulch and pull it back away from the trunk to help control moisture content and insect infestation.

A support stake may be needed if the tree is tall or in an exposed site. Protect new plantings from livestock and wildlife – young trees are a tasty treat! Physical or chemical barriers can be used.

Special care is needed for the first year. Water the newly planted trees and shrubs for the first year to make sure they don’t dry out. Control competition from weeds, brush and vines. Fertilizing is usually not needed the first year and over fertilizing can damage new plantings.

Do not try to keep your plants over winter in the container above ground. Our normal winter temperatures will likely freeze the roots and kill your plant. More information on tree planting is available from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry and the Purdue Cooperative Extension.

For more information contact the Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District
(317)786-1776 www.marionswcd.org