

PLANTING TREES – THE: ROOT WASHING METHOD

by Community Forestry Consultants

B&B and CONTAINER

1. Remove entire wire basket, twine, and burlap (container) from the root ball. Working on top of a tarp will allow you to transport the root ball remnants elsewhere.
2. Place tree in stock tank to remove soil from the root system. Soaking allows the soil to slough off gently. Duration of soaking depends on degree of clay in root ball and soil compaction of root ball. Use a garden hose to gently wash the remainder of the soil from the root system. Use your fingers or three-pronged garden trowel to remove clay and re-orient root system.
3. Look for and prune out root defects such as girdling, or broken roots. Be sure to keep the roots moist during this procedure.
4. Dig the planting hole to be only as deep as the root system and at least three times as wide.
5. Form a soil mound in the center of the hole to support the root crown of the tree, and arrange the roots radially.
6. Backfill with native soil while adding water simultaneously. Do not use any type of soil with amendment.
7. Water in Well, preferable using the water from step 2 which will contain nutrients and microbes. Do not step on the root zone, but gently firm using your hands. If soil tests indicate nutrient deficiency add an appropriate fertilizer.
8. Mulch the entire planting region with 2-4" of mulch, keeping a buffer between the trunk and the mulch to prevent disease.
9. If necessary stake your tree low and loose with 3 stakes for no longer than it takes the root system to achieve stability and anchor the tree.
10. Water the tree for the next three years adjusting the location of the water according to annual root growth. (Note: trees usually need 1 gallon per every inch of caliper)



This method is radically different from historically accepted practices. Field applications over the past two decades demonstrates that root washing B&B and container trees lead to substantial increases in tree establishment and survival. Investing the time to prepare and install trees properly will pay future dividends of reduced maintenance and mortality for the lifetime of your landscape.

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TRANSPLANTING B&B – NO ROOT WASH

1. Remove bottom of wire basket and twine. Working on top of a tarp will allow you to transport the root ball remnants elsewhere.
2. Open burlap on top of ball and locate root collar. Measure the depth of root ball from root collar to bottom of root ball.
3. Dig the planting hole to be only as deep as the measurement made in step 2 including a notch in the bottom of the hole to receive the root ball. The hole should be at least a three times as wide. The hole will resemble a shallow saucer with a divot for the cup.
4. Place the root ball in the notch of the hole and remove the remainder of the wire basket, burlap and twine. Remove excess soil covering the root collar and use as part of the backfill.
5. Backfill with native soil while watering; do not use any type of soil amendment.
6. Water the root ball (not the backfill) inside well. Do not step on the root zone, but gently firm using the hose water as a bubbler to eliminate air pockets and settle soil firmly around root ball and roots. Add an appropriate fertilizer if necessary.
7. Mulch the entire planting region with ~4" (depends on particulate size of mulch), keeping a buffer between the trunk and the mulch to prevent disease.
8. If necessary (usually not) stake your tree loose and loose with 3 stakes for no longer than it takes for the root system to achieve stability and anchor the tree.
9. Water the tree during the first three years of establishment adjusting the location of the water according to annual root growth.

WEBSITES

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- ▶ www.anla.org
- ▶ www.mortonarb.org
- ▶ www.cnr.unm.edu/fr/extension
- ▶ www.cnr.vt.edu/urbanforestry/
- ▶ www.clemson.edu/arboriculture
- ▶ www.froestry.uga.edu/
- ▶ www.puyalup.wsu.edu/%7ELinda%20Chalker-Scott/
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PUBLICATIONS

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