

# Tree Planting

Planting trees may seem like a little thing, but it has a huge impact. And it's a powerful thing anyone can do to combat climate change.

**To get started, answer these questions to learn about trees in your area:**

- **Which types of trees are best for your area?** Research and identify which trees are “right” for your area. Make sure to also consider these characteristics:
  - **Mature form/purpose**—What will the mature tree look like? How big will it be? Will it bear fruit? Provide shade?
  - **Diversity, adaptability, native vs. non-native**—Is this kind of tree different from others in the area? Does it provide diversity? Is it a species native to the area or would you be bringing in an invasive species? How well will this kind of tree adapt to changing conditions?
  - **Size, age, and form of nursery stock**—How big and how old is the tree you want to plant? In what form will it come to you from the nursery? Is it a bare-root seedling, containerized seedling, containerized tree, or balled and burlapped tree?

You might also consider the climate, planting zone, soil quality, water, space, and sun exposure of your site when choosing the “right” tree.

- **How does planting trees here help the community?** Some places have lots of trees naturally, like rain forests, and some do not, like deserts. But other places lack trees, and their benefits, because of what people have done—like cutting down forests or building parts of cities without trees. Once you understand more about the trees near you, you can better learn how to help your community.
- **How does planting trees help support local biodiversity?** Trees can provide a place for animals and other plants to live. Maybe there are animals whose habitats have been destroyed. By planting the trees that can be used as homes, you support biodiversity.
- **Where will you plant the tree(s)?** To survive, trees need to be planted in the kind of soil and with the kind of light and water that their specific species needs. To benefit communities in other ways, they need to be carefully placed, too. For example, trees properly placed around buildings can reduce air conditioning costs by 50%.
- **What is the best time of year to plant?** Trees do best when planted during times of moderate temperature and rainfall, like spring or early fall. This gives the newly planted trees time to settle in before the first frost or summer heat.
- **How do you properly plant the tree(s) in the ground?** Follow the instructions in this handout to plant balled and burlapped trees, containerized trees, and bare-root seedlings.
  - **Bare-root seedlings (\$0.50–\$3.00):** They're small and lightweight. A bare-root seedling can fit in an adult's hand and be easily planted by one person.



- **Containerized seedlings (\$1.00–\$5.00):** They're small and lightweight. A containerized seedling can fit in an adult's hand and be easily planted by one person.
- **Containerized trees (\$75–\$250+):** They're large and very heavy. A containerized tree can take three or more adults to move to the planting hole.
- **Balled and burlapped trees (\$75–\$250+):** They're large and very heavy. A balled or burlapped tree can take three or more adults to move to the planting hole.

**After you plant the tree(s), make sure to log your data on the [Girl Scout Tree Promise Tracker](#).**

Girls (or you on behalf of the girls if they are under age 13) MUST log their tree-planting data for every tree planted.

**And don't forget to care for and maintain any trees you plant!** Newly planted trees need to be cared for to make sure they thrive. After planting, trees need to be watered every 7–10 days, more often in the summer. Other tasks (such as delimiting, weeding, mulching, pruning, and fertilizing) need to be performed once every two weeks from March to October and as needed the rest of the year.

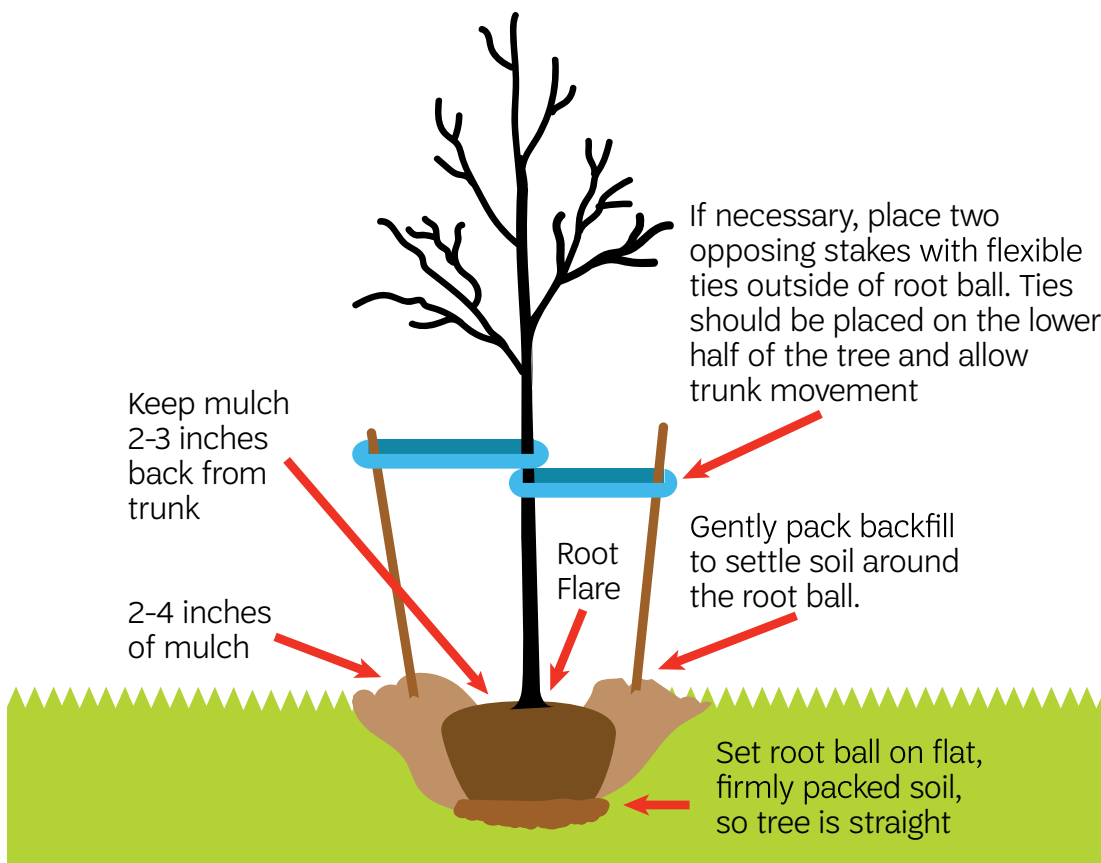
Use the **Schedule for Tree Maintenance & Care** to pledge to care for the tree(s), create a maintenance plan, and track the follow-through on that care.

*This content was provided by American Forests as a resource for the Girl Scout Tree Promise.*

## Balled and Burlapped Trees

**Important Note:** Always handle trees by the root ball.

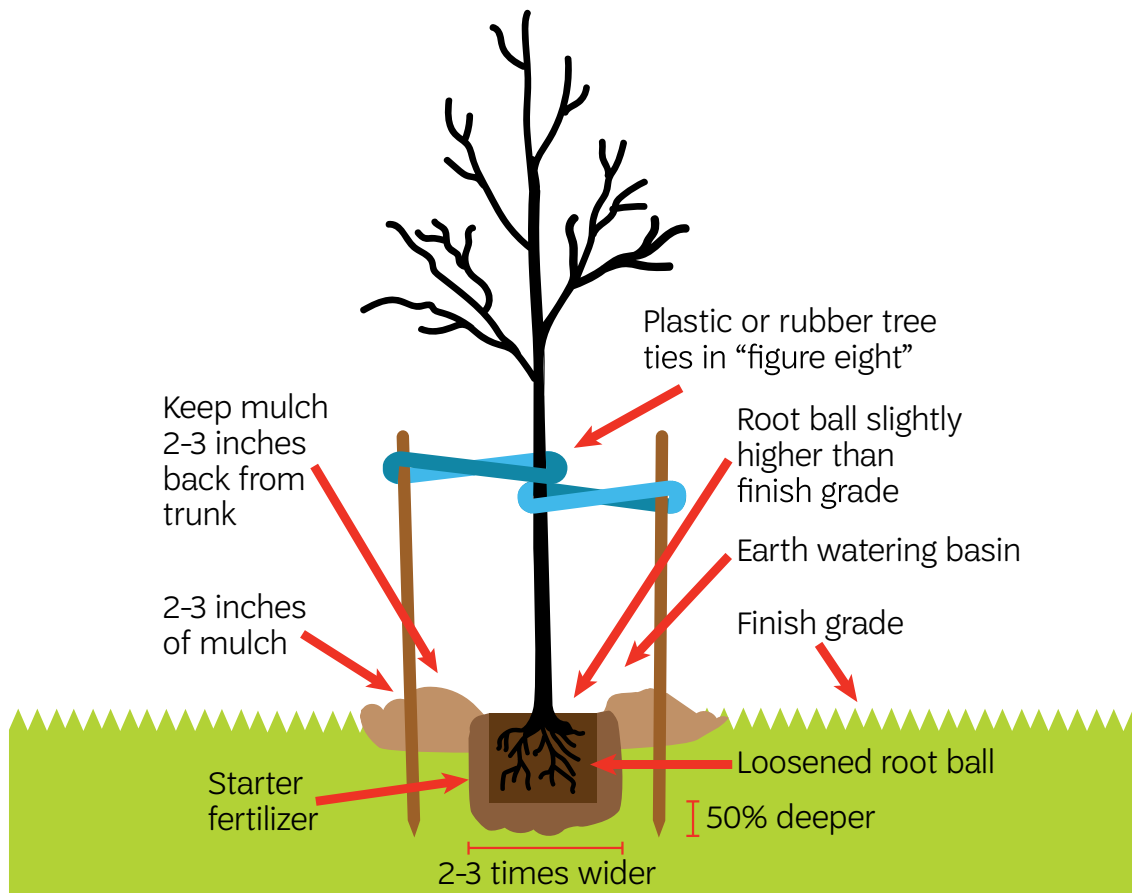
1. Gently lift and lower or roll the root ball into the hole. Position the tree in the center of the planting hole. The root collar—the trunk flare right above the root system—should be exposed and slightly above ground level. If the hole is too deep, add soil and tamp down to create a firm foundation beneath the root ball.
2. Cut away as much of the wire basket as possible without breaking the root ball. Cut and remove all twine and rope. Remove the staples holding the burlap together and peel the burlap back. Cut away any loose burlap. It is OK to leave any remaining burlap and wire under the root ball.
3. Fill the hole with soil. Lightly tamp the soil in around the roots to eliminate air pockets.
4. Remove tree tags, ribbons, or trunk wrapping.
5. Add about four inches of mulch (wood chips, ground bark, pine needles, or compost), keeping mulch four inches away from the trunk.
6. Water deeply.



## Containerized Trees

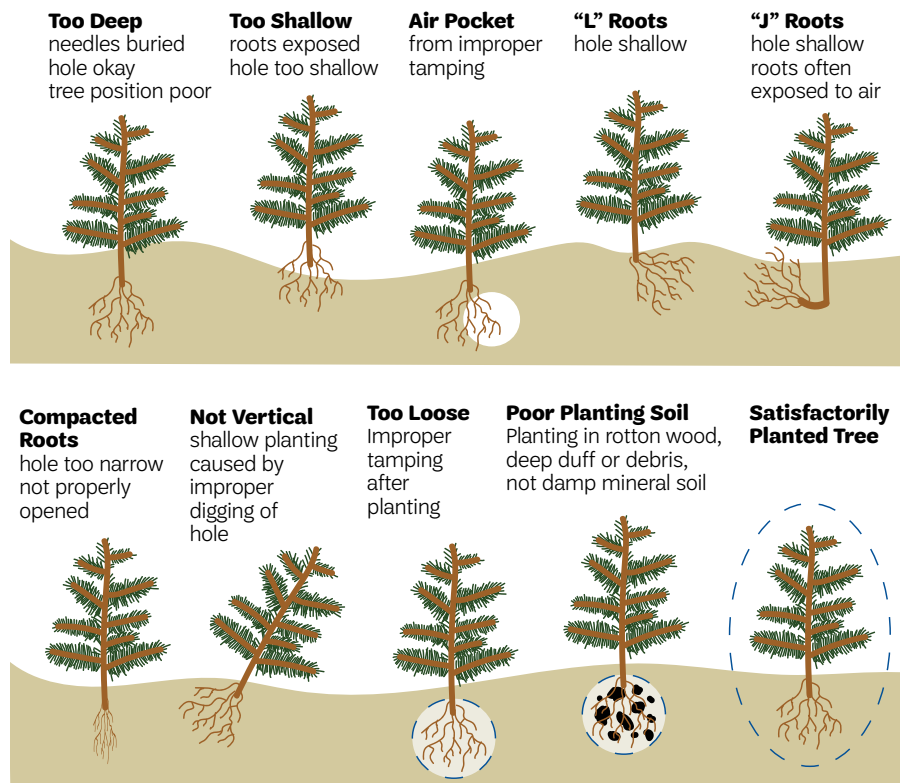
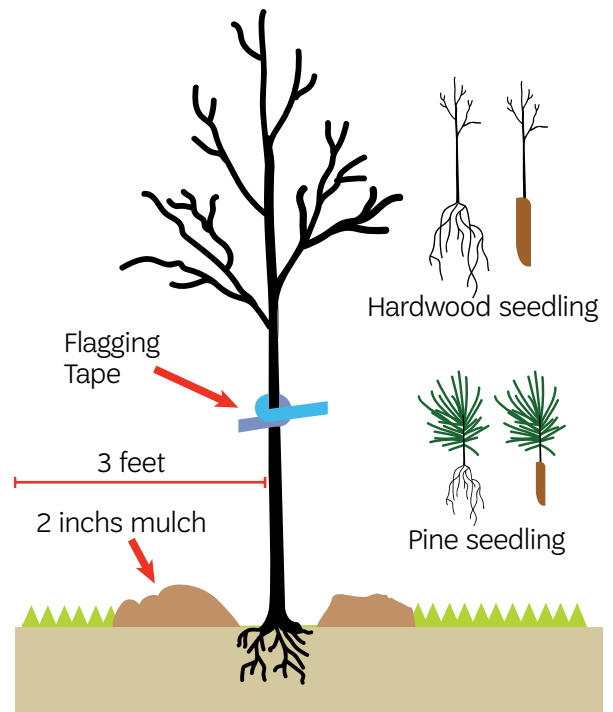
**Important Note:** Always handle trees by the container or root mass.

1. Firmly tamp around the outside of the container to separate the soil from the sides of the container.
2. Carefully remove the tree from the container.
3. Make four or five vertical (straight up and down) cuts along the side of the root mass with a sharp knife to sever circling roots.
4. Gently lift and lower or roll the root ball into the hole. Position the tree in the center of the planting hole. The root collar—the trunk flare right above the root system—should be exposed and slightly above ground level. If the hole is too deep, add soil and tamp down to create a firm foundation beneath the root ball.
5. Fill the hole with soil. Lightly tamp the soil in around the roots to eliminate air pockets.
6. Remove tree tags, ribbons, or trunk wrapping.
7. Add about four inches of mulch (wood chips, ground bark, pine needles, or compost), keeping mulch four inches away from the trunk. (Stake only if necessary due to high wind risk.)
8. Water deeply.



## Bare-root Seedlings

1. Prepare a planting area where the seedling will have adequate space to grow into a full-sized tree both above and below the ground. Avoid overhead and underground utilities.
2. Dig a hole about 2–3x wider than the seedling height and deep enough to accommodate the roots.
3. Remove any grass within a 3-foot circular area around the seedling.
4. Place the root collar (the place where the roots join the stem) at soil level.
5. Make sure that the roots stay straight and do not form a “J.”
6. Shovel in soil around the roots and tamp down lightly to remove air pockets. Use water to settle soil in the planting area. Construct a water-holding basin around the tree.
7. Spread a two- to three-inch layer of mulch (wood chips, ground bark, pine needles, or compost) over the planting hole, but not within six inches of the tree trunk. (Stake only if necessary due to high wind risk.)
8. Protect seedling from damage caused by feet, lawnmowers, pets, etc.



# GSTP: Schedule for Tree Maintenance & Care

## Pledge to Care for Your New Trees:

I pledge to help care for the \_\_\_\_\_ tree(s) newly planted at  
*(species)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(address)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(signature)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(date)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(sponsoring organization)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(your phone)*



## Create a Maintenance and Care Schedule:

In the table below, indicate how many times each task should be completed in each month

### Your Tree's Maintenance and Care Schedule

Tasks	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delittering												
Watering												
Weeding												
Mulching												
Pruning												
Fertilizing												

Trees need to be watered every 7–10 days, more often in the summer. Other tasks (such as delittering, weeding, mulching, pruning, and fertilizing) need to be performed once every two weeks from March to October, and as needed the rest of the year. Each time, take “after” photos. This will help you to evaluate the sustainability of the trees.

#### To care for any trees, make sure to:

- Water deeply around trees once a week unless there has been sufficient rainfall.
- Refresh mulch annually.
- Remove ties and stakes after one to two years.

## Track Your Tree's Care and Maintenance:

Once you've created a schedule, use a similar table to track the dates you completed the tasks. Each time you complete a task, write the date in the corresponding box.

### Your Tree's Maintenance and Care Tracker

Tasks	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Delittering												
Watering												
Weeding												
Mulching												
Pruning												
Fertilizing												

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