

Tree Planting Instructions

You should plant your trees as soon as possible. If you can't plant them right away, keep the soil in the pot moist until you can. If you can keep them in a spot out of extended direct, hot sun it reduces the risk of drying and water stress. In winter, protect the roots from freezing and thawing, but keep them in a cool place where they will remain dormant.

Dig a hole twice as wide and deep as the rootball, and loosen the soil in the bottom of the hole. Mix any soil amendments into the backfill soil – while none should be necessary in most agricultural quality soils, a small amount of a slowly available source of phosphorus like bone meal or rock phosphate, and up to one part good quality compost to two parts of the soil that came out of the hole can help provide long-term fertility, while improving aeration and moisture holding capacity to promote root establishment. Add enough soil back into the hole to create a mound in the centre which, when the rootball is placed on it, will put the soil when planting is complete at the same level as it was in the pot. The goal is to make certain no roots are exposed after planting without burying the trunk. You will need to take settling of the soil when watered into consideration, though a small depression around the tree after planting is often a good thing, especially in drier, well-drained and/or coarse-textured soils, because it will help to channel rainwater to the roots and benefit establishment.

Carefully remove the plant from the pot by turning it upside down, squeezing the pot gently, tapping or pushing on the bottom and then shaking to dislodge the rootball. If there are any larger roots heading back up the sides of the pots, these should be loosened gently so they will be directed down into your planting hole. Very long or damaged roots can be pruned back.

Place the root ball on top of the mound and backfill, using your hands to gently firm the soil as you go so there are no airspaces around the roots. Water in thoroughly to settle the soil; no further fertilizer application should be necessary at planting so long as your soil is relatively fertile. If you decide based on evidence that your soil lacks nitrogen, good quality mixed compost is safe to apply as a soil amendment or top-dressing any time of year, but more quickly available forms of fertilizer should only be applied early in the growing season up until late July to avoid promoting new, soft growth that won't have a chance to harden off before winter weather arrives.

When planting early in the season, and if you want to continue with a single-trunk standard tree, prune off any branches to leave a single central trunk up to the height at which you want your main scaffold branches to start – cut close to the main stem but take care not to cut into the branch collar (raised area where branch leaves stem). If it's past mid-summer when you plant, you may want to wait until the tree is dormant and prune in mid to late winter after the tree is dormant. In any case, take care not to remove too much at once from these young container-grown trees as leaves are the generators of energy for growth and establishment. It may be beneficial to prune back the main stem of taller potted trees to encourage good scaffold branching, but it's best to do any substantial pruning like that in winter when the trees are as dormant as possible to reduce stress.

Stake each tree but don't bind tightly to the stake as this can girdle the tree. You may want to install a protection sleeve to guard against predator or cultural damage, and painting the lower part of the main stem with a dilute latex paint can help reduce the risk of sunscald to the trunk. Control weeds around the tree to reduce competition; mulching from the trunk out 2-3 ft and/or installing heavy landscape fabric are good strategies that help to reduce work.

Irrigate during periods of droughty soil conditions as necessary, at least until well established and through the first full growing season, and remove any suckers regularly if you prefer a single-trunk standard tree.

While these trees have been bred with genetic resistance to Eastern Filbert Blight, it's now known that a small percentage may still become infected, particularly in areas of high disease pressure near infected orchards. Current evidence indicates infection occurs at very low rate on resistant cultivars, they are less symptomatic compared to older hazelnut varieties, and they may overcome the disease once infected. Infection is most likely to occur when the trees are young, and occurs on the new, soft growth in spring. It's now a recommended practice to spray with a copper fungicide in spring (alternating products to avoid developing resistance) for at least the first couple of growing seasons, with several sprays from just before bud-break until several weeks after.

See <http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/cropprot/filbertblight.htm> for more info.