

TREE PLANTING GUIDE

Trees provide us with vital resources, clean air, shelter in storms, branches for climbing, and glorious shade from summer heat. Get your new tree (or trees) into the ground and off to a healthy start with this handy guide.

Planting a tree is a cinch, as long as you are properly prepared. Get prepped to plant one tree or 100 with our straightforward guide.

1. Select a suitable location for the species – Homeowners often rush into buying a tree or trees without thinking through the various qualities of the tree and the chosen site for it. What do you want most from the tree? Shade? Privacy? Fresh fruit? What kind of soil do you have? Some trees prefer rich, moist soil, while others like dry, alkaline soil. Is there full or partial sun? The tree should be planted in an area that gets the right amount of sunshine for that species of tree. Be careful not to plant trees with large growing roots too close to your home, or next to a sidewalk, fence, or buried utilities. Don't forget about power lines. Remember to look up before you plant, and consider your tree's expected growth rate. Do the branches have enough room or will the tree require extra pruning?

Wisely placed trees also can help significantly with your heating and cooling bills. Consider placing tall deciduous (shade providing) trees on the south side of your house, where they can provide shade in the summer and still let warming light pass through your windows in the winter. Coniferous trees do well on the north or windy side of the house and can act as winter windbreakers.



Trees can live for decades, even centuries. Use this chart to determine the right size tree for your location and ensure that it grows more beautiful every year.

Height of tree (at maturity)	Minimum planting area	Distance from wall	Distance from corner of building
Short (less than 25 feet; such as dogwood or crabapple)	3 ft x 3 ft	10 ft	8 ft
Medium (25 to 40 feet, such as honey locust or hawthorn)	4 ft x 4 ft	15 ft	12 ft
Tall (more than 40 feet, such as oak or maple)	More than 4 ft x 4 ft	20 ft	15 ft

2. Schedule your planting wisely – Early spring or fall is usually the best time of year to plant a tree, because most trees are in a dormant phase then and can focus energy on root growth. Some species have special timing that should be followed, so ask your tree nursery attendant to be sure.

3. Dig wide – Always dig a bigger hole than you think you need, at least 2 to 3 times wider than the root ball or container. Every inch of diameter dug out to the side will increase your tree’s survival. The extra space allows a tree’s roots to spread and find food and water. The hole should be about as deep as the root ball or container. (Trees planted too deep can die within a few years or develop problems down the road.) Test the depth by setting the tree in the hole to see how it fits. The root flare at the base of the trunk should be right at soil level or slightly above. If your hole is too deep, add soil underneath the tree so that the root flare sits slightly above ground level.

4. Backfill hole – After the tree is in the hole, gently spread out the roots so that they make nice, direct contact with their new soil. Trim off any damaged or encircling roots. To the excavated soil, you can mix in a bit of compost, but do not add fertilizer (this can damage young roots). Then place dirt over and around the tree, and make sure the surface is firm. Create a small depression where water can settle.

5. Stake sparingly – Stakes can prevent a young tree from developing a strong trunk and roots. Use them only until the tree’s roots are established (a year is usually plenty). Use wooden stakes, pounded firmly into the ground, and soft, flat material for tying. Stakes and twine should be removed as soon as possible to allow for maximum trunk movement and normal growth.

6. Water and mulch – Particularly in dry soil, a nice long first soak is critical to a tree’s survival. Water long and slow directly onto the tree’s roots. If you’ve made a small depression in the soil around the base of the tree, the roots will have a better opportunity to drink in the water. Then mulch around the newly planted tree, in the shape of a doughnut, no more than a few inches thick. Mulch will protect it from extreme weather, disease, and pests.

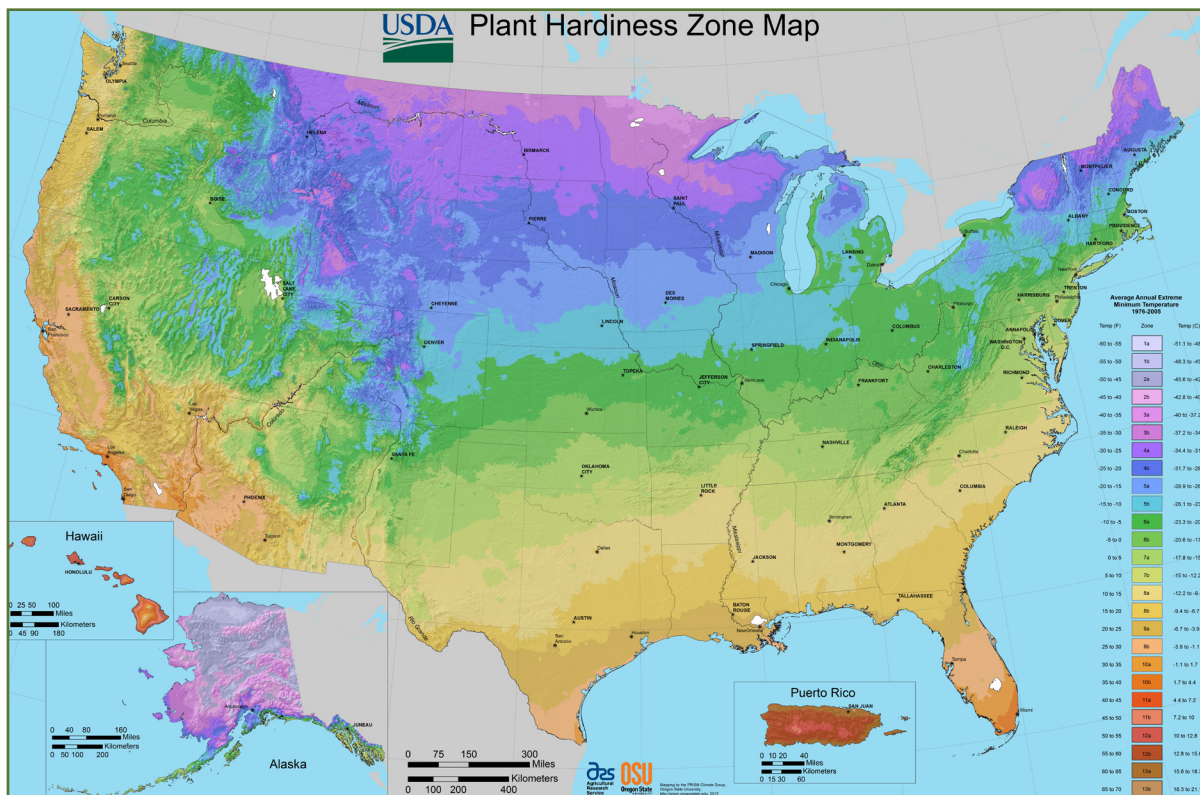


Don't make these 10 amateur mistakes of tree planting:

1. Lousy location – always pay attention to soil type, sun exposure, and the surrounding environment before you plant
2. Bad timing – plant when the tree has gone dormant, usually fall or early spring
3. Rough handling – a young tree needs careful handling and protection from the elements to survive
4. Entangled root system – remove any spiraling, girdling roots right away
5. Too small hole – make it big, or the roots will never establish themselves
6. Too deep hole – deeply planted trees will rot and develop insect problems
7. A mulch “volcano” – piles of mulch against the bark cause rot and disease
8. Incorrect watering – some species require more water, some less, so check first
9. Wrong tree – choose a tree that is healthy and that will grow well in your area (see map below)
10. Negligence – monitor the tree after it is in the ground to monitor health and prevent problems down the road. When in doubt with a question about or problem with your tree, call a reputable professional tree service.

Which trees are most likely to thrive in your area?

Find your zone in the US Department of Agriculture chart to make sure you select the best plant for your environment.



About Elite Tree Care

Elite Tree Care, LLC is family owned and operated. A close-knit team of professional members of the International Society of Arboriculture, PA Certified and Licensed Applicators and with over 30 years of experience, Elite Tree Care has grown into one of the most well-respected tree care services in the Southeast Pennsylvania Region.

At Elite we are committed to continuing education and state of the art equipment to provide expert care for the trees and shrubs on your property. Guided by the belief that good service means respect for the customer as well as the tree, Elite Tree Care is a client-focused company striving to provide excellent service and develop long-term relationships within the community.

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