

How to Plant Fruit Trees

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Materials Needed

- Another helper to hold the tree vertically (will need two sets of hands)
- A bucket/bin to soak the tree roots in water
- A shovel or spade for digging
- For dwarf and semi-dwarf trees, a stake/post to place next to the tree
- Something to bang the post in (a hammer or rock will do)
- Tree ties to connect the stake to the tree
- Tree guards for protecting against animal damage
- 1-2 gallons of water

Prepare Tree

- When the trees arrive in a box, pull out the trees and place them in a cool (not freezing) place out of the sun, e.g. your garage.
- If the trees have been in transport for more than 4 days, be sure to soak immediately in water for 6-24 hours. Plant immediately after.
- If you need to wait for more than a week to plant, be sure to keep the roots wet by spraying with water. Keep the roots in the plastic wrap so that they are protected and stay moist. Then soak in water and plant afterwards.

Prepare Soil

- The planting area should be prepared before planting.
- Fruit trees grow best in well-draining, nutrient rich, loamy soil with slightly acidic soil.
- Before planting, you can test the soil (you can use inexpensive DIY methods) for acidity, soil type, and drainage.
- Different fruit trees vary in their preferred acidity but most will still grow tolerate soils in the range of 5.0-7.5.
- Feel free to add organic matter such as compost to your soil to increase nutrients.
- Till the soil so that the nutrients become integrated into the soil and the soil becomes less compact so that the roots grow.

Dig

- Dig a hole that is about 18" deep and 18" in diameter. Bring the soaking trees next to the planting site without the roots drying out.

Place

- Put some soil in a cone shape in the hole so that when you place the tree down, the roots slope down and fan out. Trim the roots as needed so that they do not twist. This will enable the tree to spread its roots further.
- For grafted trees and not seedling, the graft union where the rootstock meets the top of the tree should be about 2 inches above ground level. If it is covered by soil then the tree will grow to a standard size and not have the characteristics of the rootstock.

Stake

- If you have a dwarf or semi-dwarf tree, we recommend putting a stake next to it which helps the tree grow straight. Place a solid metal stake 8'-10' tall next to the tree and pound it in so that it is secure and can bear weight. This step can also be done after you fill the tree in with soil.

Fill

- Holding the tree vertically, place the nutrient rich topsoil you dug out back near the roots. Once half the soil is placed around the tree, carefully press the soil down with your feet to destroy air pockets. Do NOT put fertilizer or compost into the hole as this will damage the tree.
- Put the rest of the soil on top and press down repeatedly with your foot.
- If the tree is on a slope, create a 2' rim of soil around the tree above ground level to keep the water around the tree.

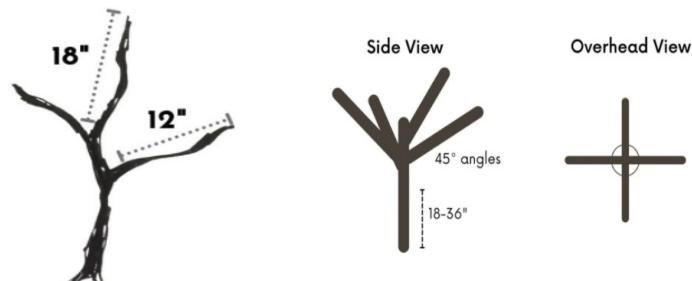
Water

- Immediately after planting, water the tree with about 1-2 gallons of water. If the soil goes down, add more soil.
- For the first year, water about one to two times a week with 1-2 gallons of water. Afterward you can water yourself only when the tree is stressed and experiencing drought.

Prune

- Pruning during planting will help train the tree from the beginning into the shape that is best for it to bear fruit.

- The **central leader** form shape is great for apple, pear, persimmon & peach trees.
- Choose a vertical leader with about four evenly spaced scaffold branches around it.
- Prune back the central leader to 18" above the highest scaffold branch.
- Cut scaffold branches that aren't 45-60 degrees and too close to one another.
- Prune the scaffold branches so that they are 12" long.
- The **open center** shape is great for almond, apricot, cherry, fig, nectarine, olive, peach, pear, persimmon, plum and pomegranate trees.
- Remove lower branches growing less than 18" above ground.
- Prune any branches growing upward in the center.
- Choose 3-5 evenly-spaced 45 degree main branches and cut the rest.
- Prune back scaffold branches 1/4 of their length.



Protect

- Immediately after planting the tree, place a tree guard around the trunk to protect it from rabbits and rodents who will eat the bark and kill your tree. The tree guards should let air flow in. Mouse guards which rap around the bark are the best protectors but they aren't recommended in the summer since insects can create habitats between the mouse guard and the bark.
- Cover the top of the soil near the tree with mulch so that the moisture stays in the soil and weeds are less likely to grow. The mulch should not touch the bark of the tree.