

City of Aurora

Tree Planting Care and Instructions



A tree is the most vulnerable during its first few years after transplant. Support your young tree's health and survival with proper handling and planting care.

Before You Plant

Get prepared. Call 811 to have a free utility locate done on your property. Locates can take 1-3 days so plan ahead—and be safe by always calling 811 before you dig.

Preparing to Plant

Plant your tree as soon as you get home. If you cannot plant it immediately, store in a cool place, do NOT let the roots dry out and plant the tree within 24 hours. Container trees can go a few days longer if you keep the dirt moist and do not let the container dry out.

Trees can't be planted in public right-of-way. The right-of-way is located approximately five feet from the sidewalk or in the strip between the curb and the sidewalk. This area is reserved for city street trees. If you would like a tree planted in the public right-of-way please contact the Forestry Division at 303.739.7177.

Handling Your Tree

Trees in containers or with balled and burlapped (B&B) rootballs should be lifted by the container or ball, NEVER by the trunk. Always set your tree down gently. Dropping a tree's rootball to the ground can result in damage to the root system.

Digging a Hole

Planting a tree at the right depth is critical for its health and survival. Many trees are planted too low, preventing the roots from receiving adequate oxygen.

Examine the tree you are going to plant. Dig a hole that is at least twice as wide as the tree's roots to encourage the root system to spread out.

Find a root flare - this is the area of the trunk that flares out to meet the top most roots. Make sure the root flare sits slightly above ground when the hole is filled in. For B&B and container trees, you may need to gently remove soil from the top of the rootball to expose the trunk flare.

For more information visit AuroraGov.org/Trees



Ready to Plant

Remove twine from the tree branches. Place your tree in the center of the hole. If your tree leans a bit to one side, tip the tree in the opposite direction and add a little dirt under the rootball to adjust it before setting it in its resting spot.

If the tree is in a container, the root system needs to be shaved to allow for proper growth. With the tree still in the container, match your curved shovel blade to the curve of the container about 1/2 inch in from the edge. Swiftly thrust straight up and down, cutting off the outer 1/2 inch of the root system. This will prevent circling roots from girding or strangling the new tree. Remove the container at the side of the hole and carefully slide the tree and rootball into position. Check the depth and make any necessary adjustments so the tree does not lean to one side or the other, but stands straight.

If the tree is Balled and Burlapped, gently place the tree in the hole. Check your depth and as always make any adjustments to correct leaning. Remove twine on the rootball and at the base of the trunk. Unwrap, fold down and cut away any excess burlap. It is fine to leave some burlap underneath the tree, as attempting to remove it may result in unnecessary damage to the new root system.

NOTE: If the rootball has a wire basket, once in the hole, use wire cutters to remove as much of the wire as possible without disturbing the rootball (ideally the top two wire rings that circle the rootball).

If the tree has bare roots, hold the tree two inches above the target depth while filling the hole with soil until the tree is stable. The soil and tree will settle and sink.

Backfill, Water and Mulch Method

- Fill the hole half way with soil
- Add water to settle the soil, filling the hole to the top.
- Fill the hole with the rest of the soil after the water has settled.
- Build a soil berm circling the base of the tree to capture and hold the water. Press soil gently with hands.
- Water thoroughly, filling the basin you've created
- After the water has soaked in, cover the soil with three to four inches of mulch to retain moisture and prevent erosion and weed growth. **NOTE:** Keep mulch four inches away from the trunk).
- Fill the basin with water and you are done!



Caring for Your Tree

Proper watering is crucial to your tree's health and survival. Follow this watering schedule for the first three years, leaving a trickling hose at the base of the trunk for 30 minutes during each watering.

- **April-May:** once every two weeks
- **June-August:** once a week
- **September-October:** once every 2 weeks
- **October-March:** once a month during times that weather permits (temperature over 50 degrees)

NOTE: Both under and over watering can kill a tree. Dig up soil three to eight inches below the surface, just outside the root area. Rub it between your fingers. If the soil does not stick together, it needs watering. If it does stick together, wait on watering and check back at a later time.

Mulch

We recommend you apply new mulch to your tree every spring and fall to maintain soil moisture, prevent competition with weeds and keep mowers away from your tree's trunk.

Aurora has a free mulch pile near the intersection of East Hampden Avenue and Dawson Street, near the water treatment facility on the west side. Bring your own containers, and a shovel or pitch fork to load your mulch. The pile is outside and accessible 24/7.

Stumped?

We are always here to help. Please call the Forestry Division with any questions on planting or tree care at 303.739.7177.



For more information about Aurora's urban forest, tree care and planting, visit AuroraGov.org/Trees