



HOW TO ESTABLISH TREES

Location

Use common sense when deciding where to plant a tree. Large-maturing shade trees should be planted away from building and utility lines. Give trees a chance - don't plant them in the wrong place.

Planting Depth

Do not plant trees and shrubs too deep. The root collar (where the first main roots branch out from the trunk) should be even with or slightly higher than the final grade of the surrounding soil.

Should Trees Be Staked?

Not necessarily, even though it is a common practice. Trees are often staked unnecessarily and improperly, even by professionals. It is a practice that is best saved for very open, windy areas. If trees need support in strong winds, brace them properly (improper staking is a leading cause of damage to new trees). Here is the proper way to brace trees:

1. Use broad, belt-like materials that won't injure the bark. **DO NOT STAKE TREES WITH A WIRE IN A HOSE.**
2. Don't apply tension - allow the trunk to sway slightly in a moderate wind.
3. Remove all bracing materials after the first summer and before the beginning of the second growing season.



Pruning Trees

Don't worry about pruning until next year - research shows that it is better to wait until after the first growing season to prune newly planted trees. The old theory to "balance the top with the roots" has been shown to prolong the establishment period. Here's why: Removing branches removes leaves. Leaves are the food factories of the tree! Dead or diseased branches are the exception to this rule, and should be properly pruned away as soon as they are discovered.

with

SUCCESS  **TREES**

Mulch

Always mulch newly planted trees properly.

Composted organic material (leaves, twigs, wood chips) is best. Cover a large area under the tree with a layer 2-3 inches deep, making sure *not* to pile it against the trunk. Although proper mulching will suppress some weed growth, you will still have to control weeds in the mulched area by hand pulling or applying an appropriate herbicide.

Watering

Always provide water during the establishment period. Larger trees require a longer establishment period. For each inch of trunk caliper at planting time, the tree needs approximately one year to

become established. (One year for a 1 inch tree, 2 years for a 2 inch tree, etc.)

A good rule of thumb is to provide water twice a week during the summer. In sandy areas, water more often. Five or 10 gallons per inch of trunk diameter is a good amount of water. A five-gallon bucket with a small hole in the bottom and placed near the trunk is an easy way to deliver water slowly to the root zone.

To keep water from running off, build up a ring of soil around the root zone when you plant the tree. This "water ring" helps keep the water where it is needed.



The South Carolina Urban & Community Forestry Council is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster stewardship of urban and community forests. For more information, call 803-896-8864.