

PLANTING BARE ROOT TREES

Evidence has shown that one of the biggest killers of trees is incorrect planting, and in particular planting too deeply. Considering that we can spend lots on trees as an investment for the future, it is essential that the initial groundwork is done correctly while we have the chance to do so.

Planting too deeply prevents essential air movement to the root system and, since roots need oxygen, it can cause the tree to suffocate. While the plant is fighting not to suffocate it is more prone to attack from harmful pathogens including honey fungus and Phytophthora root diseases.

Preparing for planting

Round planting pits are easier to mow around but in heavy soils roots could encircle the hole as in the pot, so square pit tends to allow for better root penetration at the corners. Therefore a square hole within a mowing circle is the best method for planting trees.

- ◆ Mark the planting circle; it should be three times the diameter of the bare root plant.
- ◆ If on grass remove the turf from in the circle and mark out the square.
- ◆ Excavate the square to a depth of 1ft, or larger depending on size of tree.
- ◆ Fork over the base and sides of the pit to aid drainage.

Planting

1. Place the tree in the centre of the hole and using a straight piece of wood check that the root flare is level with the surrounding soil.
2. An inoculant of mycorrhizal fungi helps trees to establish, forming a symbiotic relationship with the fine feeder roots.
3. Replace the back fill into the hole and work it around the roots, ensuring the planting depth is not altered. Firm gently from the outside of the hole inwards taking care not to damage the roots.



Larger trees will usually need staking especially if they are in very exposed conditions. A stake is driven in at 45° over the root ball facing the prevailing wind (A). Staking helps to anchor the roots while allowing the stem to move in the wind, which helps to strengthen it. So the stake is attached 40-60cm above the ground. Choose a well-cushioned tie and attach it firmly (B), loosening it as the tree grows. Finally a layer of mulch can be applied avoiding close up to the base of the tree (C).

