Before You Start
Pre-Planting Checklist

☐ Select a Location
Choosing a Place to Plant

The basic rule of thumb is: Right Tree, Right Place. You do not want a tall tree under power lines, and you do not want a fat tree in a skinny space. Before you plant, always look up. If you see power lines or anything overhead, you need to pick a tree that won’t grow tall (see Step 2). After looking up, look around to ensure the tree you choose will fit in the space when it’s full-grown. If you’re not sure how big the tree will get, ask the nursery staff. You can find additional information about Right Tree, Right Place at: Arbor Day Foundation (http://www.arborday.org/trees/righttreeandplace/) & Baltimore Gas & Electric (http://www.bge.com/safetyreliability/reliability/treetrimming/pages/choosing-the-right-tree.aspx).

☐ Get Approval
Get Digging Permission From Your Utility Companies, Which is Required By Law

Also, if you do not own the property you want to plant on, you must get permission from the landowner. If you’re planting on public property in Baltimore City, you’ll need permission from the appropriate City Agency.

For street trees, contact us (http://treebaltimore.org/get-a-free-tree/get-a-street-tree/) or call the Forestry Division at 410-396-6109. If the property is private, get permission from the property owner (that could be you) to contact Miss Utility:

» Contact Miss Utility at 1-800-257-7777 or online (http://www.missutility.net/iticle/) at least 2 full business days before you dig. Miss Utility will notify all appropriate parties and utilities.

» Wait until Your Ticket’s Cleared: Once you’re notified that your ticket has cleared, let the digging begin! Your ticket is good for 12 business days after it is issued.
Select and Purchase Your Tree

How to Select Your Tree

You need a tree that is right for your place and you. Answer these questions to help you decide what type of tree is best:

- How tall do I want my tree to grow?
- Do I want flowers?
- Do I want fruit?
- Do I want nuts?
- Do I want this tree to provide shade or privacy?

Once you have answered these questions:

» Consult online lists such as this one from the Arbor Day Foundation: https://www.arborday.org/trees/treeGuide/.


» Talk to the experts at your local nursery.

Where to Get Your Tree

» From TreeBaltimore (they’re FREE): http://treebaltimore.org/get-a-free-tree/.

» From a licensed tree dealer:

  • Check out this list of Baltimore City retailers and landscapers:* http://treebaltimore.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Baltimore_Tree_Dealers.xlsx.

» Still can’t find what you’re looking for? Search online for “plant nursery” or “garden center” and “Baltimore”.

* Note: The city does not endorse any of these dealers

Helpful Hint:

Bigger Trees = Bigger Benefits

Plant a larger tree if you have the space. They provide more shade, privacy, and clean and cool more air.
Gather Tools and Supplies

Haven’t Quite Filled Your Toolbox Yet?

No problem. Check out these local tool rental options:

» Station North Tool Library: http://stationnorth.localtools.org/library/.

Here’s what you will need:

- Shovel
- Scissors
- Mulch
- Tape Measure
- Hose or Large Bucket
- Garden Pick (for digging in rocky soil)
- Garden Gloves
- Garden Hand Cultivator (mini hand rake)
Step 1: Measure the Root Ball

☐ Measure and Record
the height (from top to bottom) and width (from side to side) of the root ball. This will help you figure out how deep you need to dig the hole.

![Diagram of tree and measurement tool]
Step 2: Dig a Hole

☐ Things to Know before Digging

How Wide?
Dig a hole with sloping sides that is 2x as wide as the tree’s root ball.

How Deep?
Dig down about one to two inches less than the height of the root ball. If the root ball gets buried too deep, the roots might not get enough water or air.

☐ Things to Look out for

Don’t Be a Glazer!
No, we don’t mean glazed donuts (if you’re really from Baltimore, you call ‘em honey dips). Glazing is when the sides and bottom of a hole become smooth and form a barrier, which is difficult for water, and tree roots to penetrate. This happens most often in moist soil with high clay content. Here’s how to avoid it:

» Before you put the tree in the hole, use the pointy end of your shovel to break up ½ inch of the soil surface in the bottom and sides the hole. This is called scarifying.

» If the soil is very moist, raise the dirt in the center of the hole’s bottom slightly higher than the surrounding area and pack it tight. This raises the height of the root ball, making sure the roots don’t drown.

Helpful Hint: Remove Debris from Soil

When digging the hole, remove large rocks and bricks, and especially mortar and concrete. If you’re in doubt about the soil quality, you can have it tested before planting. Read more about soil testing and contact UMaryland Cooperative Extension (http://extension.umd.edu/hgic/soils/soil-testing) for help.

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Step 3: 

Put Your Tree in Place

What Kind of Tree Do You Have?

- Container tree
  [See page 7]

- Balled or burlap tree
  [Skip to page 8]
Container Tree Steps

1. Carefully Remove Tree from Container

2. Check to See if the Roots Are Loose
   » Use your fingers or a garden hand cultivator to carefully loosen the fine roots. Straighten or cut roots circling the root ball, making clean cuts.
   » Prune any dead or crushed roots.

3. Lift the Tree
Lift the tree into its new home by the root ball, not the trunk. Stand the tree upright in the center of the hole.

4. How Should It Look?
Once in the ground, about one to two inches of the root ball should be above the soil level and the root flare should be exposed and visible.

Helpful Hint:
Don’t Go Too Low: Never Plant Too Deep

» The root flare should be visible and an inch or two higher than the existing soil. If it is hidden in the root ball, expose it by removing dirt from the top.

» If you find the hole is too deep: lift the tree out of the hole by the root ball (not the trunk), add dirt to the hole and tamp down well. Then replace the tree.

» If the hole is too shallow: lift the tree out of the hole by the root ball (not the trunk), and dig a little deeper. Then replace the tree.
Balled or Burlap Tree Steps

1. Remove Wire Cage
   If there is a wire cage around the burlap, remove at least the upper half.

2. Lift the Tree
   Lift the tree into its new home by the root ball, not the trunk. Stand the tree upright in the center of the hole.

3. Remove or Fold the Burlap.
   Once the tree is in the hole, remove or fold the upper half of the burlap under the root ball. (Do not leave any ropes or wires around the trunk).

4. How Should It Look?
   Once in the ground, about one to two inches of the root ball should be above the soil level and the root flare should be exposed and visible.

Helpful Hint:

Don’t Go Too Low: Never Plant Too Deep

» The root flare should be visible and an inch or two higher than the existing soil. If it is hidden in the root ball, expose it by removing dirt from the top.

» If you find the hole is too deep: lift the tree out of the hole by the root ball (not the trunk), add dirt to the hole and tamp down well. Then replace the tree.

» If the hole is too shallow: lift the tree out of the hole by the root ball (not the trunk), and dig a little deeper. Then replace the tree.
Step 4: 
**Fill ‘Er In**

**Filling the Hole**

Once the tree is settled in the center of the hole, put the original soil back into the surrounding hole (not on top of the tree). As every few inches of soil is filled back into the hole, walk lightly around the tree, packing down the soil with the shovel as you go. Repeat this until the hole is filled.

**Helpful Hint:**

**Build a Berm**

If you have extra soil, build a small berm around the hole to hold water and direct it to the tree's roots.
Step 5: Mulch Your Tree

Mulch to Keep Soil Moist
Mulch helps keep the soil moist and promotes healthy tree growth. It’s also a great excuse for adults to play in the dirt.

Here’s How to Do It:

- Using wood chips or bark mulch (you can also add leaves or grass clippings from your yard), spread an even layer of mulch two inches to three inches deep around the tree. Spread it at least to the diameter of the tree’s crown (also known as dripline to dripline).
- If the tree is in a sidewalk cutout, mulch the entire cutout. If the cutout is too large, do your best.

Helpful Hint:
Keep Mulch Away from the Trunk
Leave about a three-inch circle of bare soil around the tree’s trunk. Deep layers of mulch, especially piled against the trunk, can attract pests and lead to decay or disease.
Step 6: Just Add Water

- **15 to 20 Gallons**
  
  New trees need approximately 15 to 20 gallons of water at the time of planting, depending on how dry the soil is. See our maintenance tips under the next step to learn more about when and how much to water your tree.

**Helpful Hints:**

- 10 minutes of a hose on medium pressure = about 20 gallons of water.
- Use a bucket to measure gallons.
- Use a Gator Bag during the summer. These usually hold 20 gallons of water.
Keep Up the TLC

☐ That’s It—You Did It!

Just keep giving your tree the TLC it deserves, and it'll be growing strong and tall in no time. Gosh, we remember when it was just a little sapling...

Trees should be watered regularly during their first two years of life. Here are some simple guidelines for knowing when and how much to water.

Water Your Tree When:

» The leaves are out. Usually from mid-May to mid-September.
» The top few inches of soil are dry to the touch.

Not Sure if Your Tree Needs Water?

» Dig down a couple inches at the edge of the planting hole.
» If the soil feels dry, powdery or crumbly, get your tree some water, stat.

How Much?

» Use at least 20 gallons once a week in the absence of rain and at least 20 gallons twice a week during the height of the summer (July – August).
» You’ll know your tree’s soil is adequately watered when it forms a ball when squeezed.

Helpful Hints:

Be Careful Not to Overwater!

More newly planted trees die from overwatering than lack of water.

Keep It Mulched!

Mulch helps hold the water in.
Register Your Tree

☐ Register Your Tree!

We want to thank you for helping us grow Baltimore's tree canopy.

Please register your new tree at http://treebaltimore.org/organizers/register-your-tree so we can send you a personal thank you!