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HOW TO PLANT BALLED & BURLAPPED AND CONTAINER GROWN PLANTS

Mel's recommends the following steps to properly plant your landscape plants. Select a location that meets the plant's needs for light exposure, soil moisture and drainage.

SITE PREPARATION

Plants added to your landscape will grow best when planted in native soil or in soil that is uniform in structure and texture throughout the rooting area. Mel's recommends that if you amend your soil, do so for a large area such as an entire landscape bed, not just a planting hole.

To amend large areas, place two to four inches of organic matter over the entire area. Work the organic material into the soil to a depth of six inches or more. Suggested amendments include compost, processed steer manure and peat moss. Thoroughly mix fertilizer into the amended soil. Mel's recommends bone meal or a transplant fertilizer, such as Webfoot Jumpstart.

If your soil does not drain well, consider creating a berm by mounding an enlarged planting area. To accomplish this, re-grade the area or add topsoil so the root ball of the landscape plant is above the previous grade. When adding topsoil, work some into the top four to six inches of native soil before adding more.

PLANTING HOLE

Dig a planting hole that is twice as wide and only as deep as the plant's root ball or container. Place the plant in the hole so that the top of the root ball is at, or slightly above, the surrounding soil.

PLANTING

1. Thoroughly water plants several hours before transplanting.
2. Plant when temperatures are mild and the sunlight is not intense.
3. The method of planting varies with how the root ball was grown:

Balled/Burlap Plants

Place Balled/Burlap Plants in the planting hole with the natural burlap still intact around the root ball. Remove all strings and twine to prevent girdling of the roots and stem as the plant continues to grow. Pull back the burlap from around the trunk and the top of the root ball. Cut off the loose burlap as much as possible without damaging roots or fold it down below the soil level. Be careful not to let root ball fall apart. If you must leave burlap, it will decompose over time.

Often the soil of a balled/burlap plant is very different in structure and texture than that of the native soil into which it is being planted. If the difference is extreme, it is important to expose the plant's roots to the native soil. To do so, gently pierce the sides of the root ball.

Fiber Pots

Plant Fiber Pots directly into the ground. Thoroughly soak the pot before planting. Make several vertical slices into the sides and bottom of the pot to speed the decomposition process for the pot and allow new roots to grow readily into the surrounding soil. Place the pot into the planting hole and remove all, or at least the top rim, of the pot to below the soil level.

Container-Grown Plants

Remove Container-Grown Plants from the container. Loosen, spread or cut roots that circle inside the container so they will branch into the native soil. If the roots are woody, cut or slash them. In addition, make six to eight vertical slashes around the root ball.

If the encircling roots are quite woody, butterfly the root system by making a vertical cut through the bottom one-third of the root area. Spread the resulting two flaps apart and across a mound of soil in the bottom of the planting hole.

4. Backfill the planting hole with native soil. It is important that new roots come in contact with native soil to properly establish the plants. Pack the soil lightly as the hole is backfilled to eliminate air pockets.
5. Create a water basin so that water runs away from the plant's trunk but not away from the root area. Once the plant is established, usually after a year or two, the basin may be leveled.
6. Trees that do not stand on their own will require staking until the root system is well established which is typically less than one year. Support the tree with stout stakes, which are long enough when sunk into the ground to reach the point where the major scaffold limbs branch out from the trunk.

Never secure the tree so it is completely motionless. It is actually desirable to allow a small amount of movement of the trunk so the tree will develop a strong, well-anchored root system. Protect the bark by running the ties from the stake through a piece of plastic tubing or hose at the point where it contacts the trunk.

7. Water the plant thoroughly immediately after planting.

AFTER-PLANTING CARE

Newly planted plants benefit from deep watering. Turn the hose on low, place it close to the trunk and allow water to soak into the root area over a long period of time.

How often water is needed will depend on the time of year, weather conditions and size of plant. To determine whether a plant needs water, probe carefully around the root zone and check the moisture level of the soil. Do not wait for signs of wilting before watering.

During prolonged periods without rain, check the soil moisture. This is particularly important during the first two years after planting.

Plants use nutrients during the growing season. Apply fertilizer according to the recommended rate on the label.

Please contact Mel's Staff if you have questions when planting or caring for your landscape plants.