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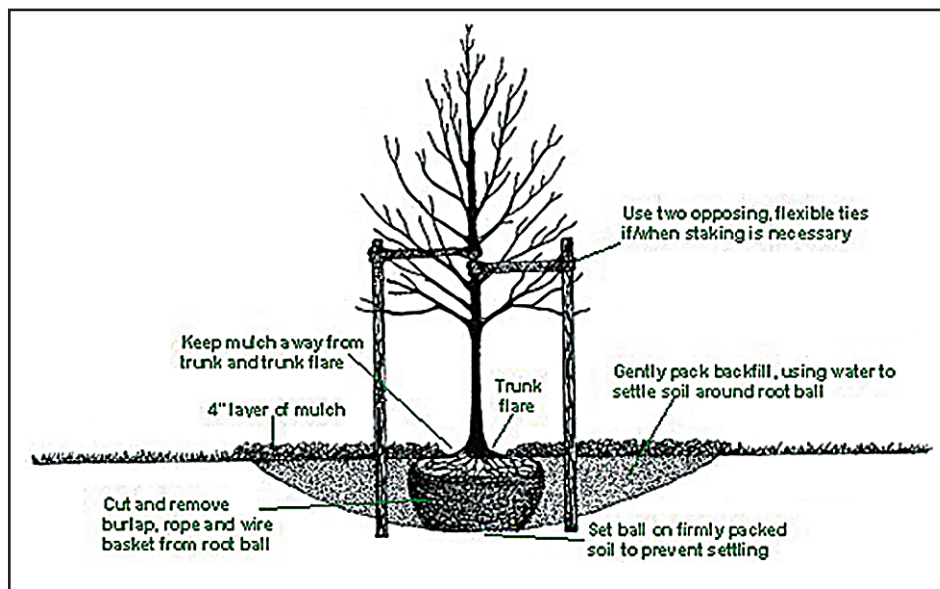
Feature HOME & GARDEN

Give your tree a good start

By Grant Jenkins
The Tree Company, West Cork

With your trees delivered safely and/or stored correctly, you may now think about planting them. Location is the next important consideration. Think about the final mature size of your tree. Choose a location with deep good quality top soil, which will be undisturbed and away from heavy pedestrian traffic which will compact the surrounding soil and damage root function. Do not plant in waterlogged soil, under the dense canopy of other trees, too near to buildings in the case of large growing trees, under power lines or above underground services. Once you have a good location you can now start digging!

Dig a hole that is two to three times the diameter of the root area and deep enough to match the depth of the trees root system. Place the soil to one side ready for backfilling and remove any large stones, weeds and turf. Fork over



Give your tree the best start possible by planting correctly.

the bottom of the hole to encourage drainage.

Place the tree in the hole, it is important to plant the tree at the correct depth, if planted too deep the roots will be hindered due to lack of oxygen. To be sure of the correct depth look for the trunk flare on the tree, this is where the roots begin to spread at the base of the trunk. You should aim to have the soil level with the bottom of the trunk flare when you

have finished planting.

If your tree requires staking you should now decide where you are going to place this in relation to your tree. Size of your stake and whether you are using single staking or double staking method will depend on your tree type and size, install the stakes before back filling to avoid driving the stake through the root area and damaging any roots. Make sure the tree is straight by looking from various directions.

Start by filling in the hole and around the roots with the soil you put to one side. You need to gently firm in the soil making sure not to compact each layer. When planting bare root trees you should make sure that all the roots come into contact with the soil making sure there are no air pockets. This can be done by gently agitating the trunk while back filling with soil or by sprinkling water over each layer of soil to bed in. Root ball trees should be planted

with the hessian and wire that holds the root ball together, however cutting the wire and hessian at the top and peeling down a third of the root ball can be beneficial. Containerised trees should be carefully removed from their container and then planted trying not to disturb the root system.

Once the tree is positioned and planted the stakes should be cut to the height required, short staking is preferred because while holding the roots firm it allows the trunk to move which encourages root establishment. The tree will now need to be secured firmly to the stakes with tree tie and cushioned spacer to stop the trunk rubbing on the stake.

The next step is to mulch around the base of the tree this will reduce weed competition, retain moisture and maintain an even soil temperature. There are many types of mulch which can be used, for example woodchip, leaf litter or

straw, however they must be well composted. Any fresh material such as grass cuttings are not suitable and can be detrimental to the tree. A depth of three to four inches is good but care should be taken not to place the mulch up against the trunk as this can cause decay of the living tissue.

The tree should have no fertiliser applied at the time of planting because we want to encourage the roots to grow out of the tree pit adapting them to and sustaining the tree in the surrounding soil.

The tree should be kept well watered at least once a week and the soil should be moist especially during hot weather. However, if the ground becomes waterlogged then you are over watering and this can be as bad as not watering. Avoid pruning and only remove broken branches that occurred during planting as any heavy pruning at this stage will only add to the trees shock from planting. Formative pruning can be carried out once the tree has established and is thriving.

The above planting method can be scaled up or down according to the size of your tree and used for bare root, root balled or containerised trees.

Give your tree a good start and it will provide you and your family with pleasure for many, many years.

If you need any further information on tree planting or indeed any other tree matters please write to The Tree Company, Ballydehob, Co Cork or email at info@thetreecompany.ie or call the office on 028 37630.

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