

# Things to do before planting a tree

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It feels like Autumn is already here so we might as well make inroads into garden plans and winter projects. Here are a few things to consider before starting any tree planting in the garden this winter.

When purchasing, avoid trees with broken or dead branches, tears and abrasions on the stem and any obvious pest or disease. Choose a tree with an evenly balanced crown and a good central leader.

Trees come in various sizes from 1 metre up to 10 metres. Small trees are cheaper to buy, easy to handle and will generally establish quicker, but you will have to wait longer for the desired effect. Large trees give instant impact, they require more aftercare to aid their establishment and you may require professional help when planting really large specimen trees.

There are several ways trees are supplied by nurseries, garden centres and tree or land-



*A tree nursery*

scape contractors ie:

- **Bare root** – these trees are lifted out of the ground in late autumn or winter and come with no soil around the root system. A sign of a good bare root is a large evenly branched root system with a high percentage of fine roots. These trees can be planted from November to March and trees of various sizes can be supplied as bare root.
- **Root balled** – These trees are grown in an open field

and lifted with specialist machinery that contains the soil undisturbed around the root system this is then wrapped tightly in Hessian and secured with a wire mesh which should not be loose. Larger trees are often supplied using this method. These trees can be planted from October to April.

- **Containerised** – These are trees that have been grown in the open field and then potted in their final containers and then grown on to

create a fibrous root system. You should take care not to purchase trees which have been in the containers too long and are ‘pot bound.’ A sign of this is when tree roots can be seen growing out through the bottom of the container. They are best planted during the dormant season but can be planted all year round given the correct aftercare.

Once purchased ensure correct delivery procedures are carried out. Stress that the tree roots (in the case of bare root trees) are kept moist and covered at all times, small trees can be bagged in groups but larger trees should be bagged individually. When tree roots are left out to the open air even for a very short space of time they begin to desiccate and fine root hairs die, the more that die the less chance of survival as they are not able to absorb water and nutrients. Root drying is not a major problem when you transport rootballed or containerised trees as their roots are nicely

protected, however you should make sure the container or root ball is moist and not dried out. Any reputable nursery or garden centre will ensure that the time from when your trees come out of the ground or heeling in area to the time they are delivered is kept to a minimum.

It is important to store your trees correctly if you do not intend to plant them straight away after delivery. The bare root and root ball trees should be ‘heeled in’ this means placing the tree in a shallow trench and covering the roots with soil or mulch temporarily. Containerised trees should be placed securely where they cannot get blown or knocked over. Regular watering keeping the roots moist at all times is essential.

*Next month..... ‘How to Plant’. If you need any further information on native trees or indeed any other tree matters please contact us at The Tree Company, Ballydehob, Co Cork 028 37630 or email us at [info@thetreecompany.ie](mailto:info@thetreecompany.ie)*