

# HOW TO PLANT A TREE

Planting a tree correctly can be a rewarding experience, especially as you see it thrive and take great shape over the next few years, meeting all your expectations. However, if planted incorrectly, your tree may struggle to ever take root in its new home, meaning it will struggle and possibly die in the short term, or fall down in years to come. Follow Dream-time's planting instructions below to ensure your new tree will grow to its full potential, living a long and healthy life.

Different experts have different ideas about how to plant a tree. This is our version, and its proven successful for us for over thirty years, so either we've had thirty years of incredible luck, or we must be doing something right.

When you purchase a tree it should be lush and healthy. That is, the tree should have clean healthy leaves, free of spotting or disease, with some new growth or buds. The root system should be moist and have a clean white root system. Beware of a tree with blackening or rooting bark at the base.

Your first step is to dig the hole. We recommend digging the depth of the hole twice the height of the root ball in the container, and three times wider than the container or more. Why more? Well the tiny root systems of your tree will find it easier to penetrate soft loose loam than hard compacted loam, this encourages tree growth. This is a great method to ensure your trees roots do not spiral in the ground, and protect it from falling down in years to come. Do not dig the hole with an auger. Whilst an auger sounds like an easier alternative to the shovel, they tend to create smooth, hard, sides to the hole, which it turn makes it hard for small roots to penetrate the walls, and spread.

If your soil is hard loam, clay loam or sand, I recommend mixing the removed soil with thirty percent potting mix. This will help your root system, improve water holding and encourage good bacteria, worm aeration and castings (organic fertilizer).

Now it's time to plant your tree. Remove the tree from the container by sliding it out on its side. If the root system has spiralling, with a sharp knife score four 10mm deep cuts evenly down the sides of the root ball and a cross underneath. Most container trees have root spiral, this is not a bad thing but if you had to cut the pot off to get the tree out of the container, you have bought the wrong tree. This tree is root bound and should be returned to place of purchase.

## The secret

Put some of your mixed soil back into the hole, place the tree so as the top of the root ball is level with the ground. Now for a tree, in say a 300mm container, add a bucket of water over the tree root system in the hole, then back fill compacting well. Make a moat around the newly planted tree and water well. The reason we added water before we back filled was to prevent the fine feeder roots, found at the outer edge of the container, from drying out. Dry back fill material acts like a sponge, killing these fine feeder roots. The more water the better, to stop this from happening and to get any air out.

Add a slow release fertilizer around the top of newly planted tree; this type of fertilizer activates with water and heat. **It does not work if you put it in the hole.** Slow release is very forgiving; a little bit extra doesn't hurt. Follow the recommended instructions on the packaging.

Mulch well 100mm thick. Make sure to keep it away from the trunk, so as to avoid it rotting. The mulch insulates the tree keeping moisture longer and keeps the weeds down. By the way, the enemy of the tree is the whipper snipper. Cutting the bark (ring barking) will kill the tree.

By following these steps, you've given your tree the best possible chance to grow, and become a magnificent tree.