

# How to Plant a Tree

- The best time for planting trees in general is mid-October to mid-April. Plant bare-root trees when dormant: mid-February to mid-March.
- Select healthy, well-budded trees with an established trunk and well-spaced lateral branches. Avoid trees with tight, branching crotches.
- For street trees, look for a trunk whose branches start six or seven feet up. Most city codes call for this to keep sidewalks clear.
- Call 811 several days before planting to have the location of underground utilities marked so you don't accidentally hit a line or pipe when digging. It's the law, it prevents damage and interruptions to your service, and it just might save your life!
- Dig the hole about the same depth or a few inches shallower than the root ball or container. Once the tree settles, it should be at or slightly above ground level.
- Roughen up the side of the planting hole, breaking up compacted soil. This allows the roots to spread beyond the hole.
- After placing a balled-and-burlapped tree in the hole, untie the burlap's wire or twine and carefully pull the burlap down the sides of the root ball. To prevent damage to the root ball, do not remove the burlap.
- Break up the soil you dug out and remove rocks. When the soil is broken into small pieces, the roots are more able to get water and nutrients.
- Return the soil to the hole. Avoid compacting the soil too tightly on top of the root ball.
- Water the tree thoroughly.
- Mulch the base with two-four inches of wood chips to keep the root ball from drying out too quickly. This also prevents compaction and controls weeds. Keep a few inches around the tree trunk clear of mulch, however, for air circulation.



## Planting in your neighborhood

Interested in getting more trees in your neighborhood? Friends of Trees, a Portland-based nonprofit supported in part by PGE, brings friends and neighbors together for tree-planting projects along city streets, in natural urban areas and on school grounds.

Visit [FriendsofTrees.org](https://www.friendsoftrees.org) for tree guidance, to buy trees or to organize or join a planting project

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- Generally, a tree with a two-inch-diameter trunk or less should be staked. Use stakes on both sides and place beyond the root ball. Tie the tree to stakes, leaving the ties loose around the tree. (A mature tree will be stronger if it is allowed to bend in the wind when young.) Remove the stakes when the tree has established its roots (usually one-two years).
- Prune branches that are crossing, diseased or broken. Be careful not to remove too much good wood. It is important to protect the above-ground part of the tree because this is where the tree's food is produced and transported to the roots for development.