

Frequently Asked Questions About Bareroot Plants

For how long can I keep my bareroot plants before planting them?

It is best to plant them as soon as weather permits it. As soon as the ground is "diggable." Bareroot plants don't mind cold temperatures as much as we do. However bareroot plants may be kept up to several weeks before planting as long as you are able to keep the plants out of the sun and the roots moist and cool.

Do I prune the roots?

Broken and crossing roots should be pruned. Roots should be encouraged to grow out past the planting hole and into the surrounding native soil. So it is better to prune the roots than to wrap them around in a circle inside too small a planting hole. If you have any questions just ask and we'll show you.

Do I have to prune the branches at all?

Only broken branches should be pruned at the time of planting.

How deep do I plant?

Your planting hole should be dug wide with sloping sides and as deep as the depth of the roots. The most important thing to remember is to keep the root flare up at soil level – do not plant too deep! Better to have the flare a little above soil level than below it. See our [planting guide](#) for an illustration.

If I plant it right away how long before it needs to be watered again?

The best way to know when your plant needs to be watered again is to look at and feel the soil near your plant. Is it damp? Cool spring temperatures can prevent well-watered soil from drying out. Your new plant needs moisture but it is easy to overwater. Be aware that cold soil can feel wet. Did any soil stick to your finger? Once your plant is actively growing it will require generous watering every week or ten days during the first year.

Do I fertilize right away?

The only fertilizer that should be required initially is a root stimulant fertilizer. In fact your new bareroot plant will benefit from soaking the roots in a solution of this for 3 – 6 hours (no more than over night) before planting. Slow release fertilizers and slow activating organic fertilizers can also be beneficial, but never plant dry synthetic fertilizers in the planting hole, as they can burn the new tender roots

What do I mix into the soil if I have very sandy soil?

Sandy soils have very fast drainage and thus hold water and nutrients poorly. If your soil is very sandy the best thing you can do is to add organic matter. Peat is especially good because it holds 20 times its weight in water. A mixture of 1/3rd native soil, 1/3rd peat and 1/3rd compost blended together should be used to backfill your planting hole.

What do I mix into the soil if it contains a lot of clay?

If your soil has a high clay content adding peat is not the answer. Clay particles are extremely small and tend to pack together, leaving no room for air or water movement. What is needed is rough compost. We prefer leaf compost to cow manure, as it is more coarse and drier. Also, adding gypsum at the rate of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup per tree can help break up clay soil. No matter what your soil type you can't go wrong by amending your soil with composted organic matter.

How thick do I mulch?

Mulching with organic mulches (eg shredded bark) is one of the best things we can do for a tree. The most obvious benefits are reducing water loss from the soil, controlling weeds, and improving the soil nutrition and structure. Mulches also act as an insulation blanket and give the landscape a well-groomed appearance. But like anything, there is a right way and a wrong way. If you use the wrong material or pile it on too deep it can cause problems.

Mulch should be spread about 2-4" deep over the root area of the tree - think 2" for clay soils and 4" for sandy soils. Too much mulch can make it difficult for water and air to penetrate through to the root zone. Or in heavy soils it may lead to excess moisture and promote root rots. If you observe the trees in a forest and you will find that nature provides a thin layer of composted leaves mulching the entire root zone of the plant. So apply the mulch as broadly as practical and the tree will be grateful.

Be sure to keep the mulch away from the trunk by a few inches. Mulch piled up against the trunks of young trees may stress the bark tissues and promote insect and disease problems. It may also create habitats for rodents that chew the bark and can girdle the trees.