



REFERENCE: First Year Care Guide

Newly planted perennials, trees and shrubs need extra care to establish a healthy root system. A *healthy root system is the key to your new plant's success*. During this acclimation period, plants will put more energy into developing a root system than in producing new growth. The size of the plant and environmental conditions will determine how long it takes for the plant to acclimate to its new home. For large trees and shrubs, you should not expect to see much green growth the first year, depending on variety. Larger specimens can take up to 3 years to produce growth. Perennials can take 3 years— first to 'sleep, then creep, then leap.' *The larger the plant initially, the longer the care.*

PLANTING TIME

The time of year you plant will greatly affect how quickly your new plants become established. Hardy container trees and shrubs can be planted anytime of the year, even winter; however *spring & fall are the easiest times to establish new plantings*. If you plant new trees and shrubs during the heat of the summer, be prepared to pay keen attention to the water needs of your new plants. Dig a planting hole 2 to 3 times as wide as the root ball, and the making the depth of the hole the same as its height or slightly shallower. Soak *all* new plants with **Root Stimulator** prior to planting, ensuring the entire root ball is wet. Highly recommended is the addition **Espoma's Bio-tone Starter Plus** soil bacteria & fungi jump-starter in the hole and contacting roots to further ease transplant stress and reduce shock. Plant, replace soil, and apply 2-3 inches of mulch to cover the root ball area, spaced at least 1-2" away from the trunk or any main branches. This will greatly help to conserve moisture, moderate temperatures, and prevent weeds.

WATERING

Continue to apply the **Root Stimulator** at least every 3 weeks when the plant requires watering. Plants that prefer acidic soil, such as azaleas and Japanese maples, should also receive an application of a soil acidifier such as **Liquid Seaweed with Iron** at planting time. All new trees and shrubs will require supplemental hand watering after planting for up to a year, and larger trees up to 2 years. *Note that you CANNOT rely on your sprinkler system alone to provide adequate water to new plantings, especially in summer months*. Use a hose to directly apply an ample sized puddle around the root ball. Let the water absorb, and then repeat. Water plants early in the morning (around 6-7 am).

Do this approximately: 3 times per week in summer; 2 times in spring and fall, and 1 time in winter.

You can also use soaker hoses or irrigation bags to provide a slow drip to individual plants. *Make sure the mulch layer is maintained year-round*, being especially mindful to protect the plant for its first winter or two.

FERTILIZATION

High-nitrogen or other fertilizers that encourage green growth are *not* recommended at planting time. After the first year, use the appropriate fertilizer specific to your plant's needs, such as **Espoma's Tree-tone** for trees, **Holly-tone** for acid-loving plants, or **Texas Tee** for general use. Most plants can be fed each early spring (February into March) and early fall (September), adding an early summer feeding (June) for any fall bloomers.

PREVENTATIVE CARE

Are your plants not looking well? *Let us know right away*. Bring leaves and /or a branch sample, *along with* close-up and further away photos if at all possible. Many problems can be diagnosed by answering a few questions about growing conditions. Properly chosen and planted, many plants can make a full recovery if the problem is diagnosed early.

We are here for your planting success! Our Garden Advisors are available every day, and our Garden Coach Program offers the benefits of additional time and home visits to help you feel more confident with everything you grow.