

PLANT LOCAL

NATIVE TREES MAKE ATTRACTIVE LANDSCAPING, HABITAT

Creating a picture-perfect landscape using native plant species is more attainable than you might think. Use resources available at your fingertips to plan and plant a beautiful setting for your home and reduce your impact on the environment. “There are so many native species of plants, trees and shrubs to choose from,” says Yvonne Dunphe, horticulturist and MetroParks conservation volunteer coordinator. “Being knowledgeable about the relationship between native plants and animals also gives you the opportunity to create the perfect habitat for creatures you’d like to see in your backyard. Did you know that by selecting the right plants, you can attract your favorite butterflies or songbirds to your yard? How cool is that?”

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources Natural Areas Division has publications free to download that will help you select native plants for your landscape, as does the Ohio State University Extension Office. There are also many books available at your local branch of the Dayton Metro Library, including *Landscaping with Native Trees*, by Guy Sternberg and Jim Wilson (Houghton



Photo by the Black Rock Garden Club

Mifflin Publishing) and *The Landscaping Revolution: Garden With Mother Nature, Not Against Her*, by Andy Wasowski with Sally Wasowski (Contemporary Books). There are also mobile applications for smartphones or tablets to help you plan your landscape, even some with reminders of what to plant throughout the year and reminders for maintenance. Prices range between \$1 and \$10.

HOW TO PLANT A TREE

Once you have found a good spot for the native tree you selected, here are the basic steps to planting the tree in your home. “This is definitely a project for the whole family,” Dunphe says. “Involve your children based on age-appropriate tasks. Older kids can help dig the hole and younger children can help with simple tasks like watering or spreading mulch or wood chips.” The ideal time to plant trees and shrubs is during the dormant season and in the fall after leaf drop or early spring before budbreak. Weather conditions are cool and allow plants to establish roots in the new location before spring rains and summer heat stimulate new top growth.

- Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball and slightly shallower than the root ball. Make the hole wide, as much as three times the diameter of the root ball but only as deep as the root ball. It is important to make the hole wide because the roots on the newly establishing tree must push through surrounding soil in order to establish.
- Lay the tree on its side with the container end near the planting hole. Tap the bottom and sides of the container until the root ball is loosened. Slide the pot off the root ball and gently lower the tree into the hole. If your tree is ball and burlap, cut the string or twine

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fastening the burlap at the top near the trunk, then set the tree into the hole and rock the tree to one side, tucking the burlap underneath, and to the other side, freeing the burlap from under the root ball.

Have the top of the root ball about 1/2 to 1 inch above the surrounding soil surface, making sure not to cover it with soil unless roots are exposed. Make sure the trunk flare is visible. The trunk flare is where the roots spread at the base of the tree. If the trunk flare is not partially visible, you may have to remove some soil from the top of the root ball.

Orient the tree while you have the chance. Situate it so that branches won't be in the way of pedestrian or car traffic. If you prefer a particular side of the tree, turn it toward a prominent viewpoint (such as your kitchen window). In sunny areas, orient the tree so that the best-shaded side of the trunk faces southwest. When turning the tree, lift it from the base of the root ball, not from the base of the trunk.

Once the tree is in the hole, stand back and make sure it's standing upright. Tilt the root ball until the tree is straight, then backfill firmly under and around the root ball.

Gently press down the soil as you backfill. Using the heel of your foot or the handle end of the shovel, gently compress the soil to collapse any large air pockets. This will help stabilize the tree in the hole. Don't wait until the planting is finished; press down every few shovels of soil.

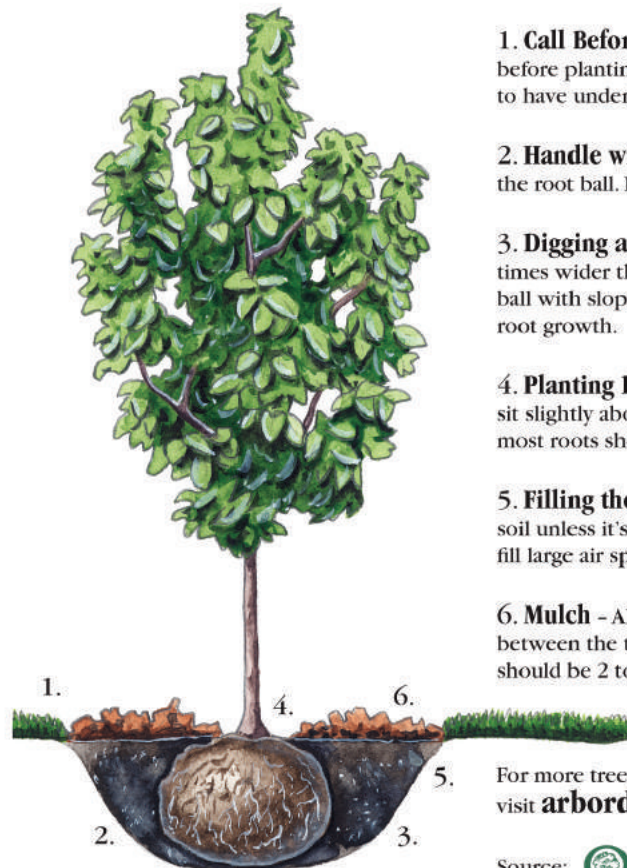
ONLINE EXTRA

Visit metroparks.org/forests for a list of links and resources for planting native trees and shrubs in your home!



Photo by A Concord Carpenter

Six things you should know when planting a tree.



1. Call Before You Dig – Several days before planting, call the national 811 hotline to have underground utilities located.

2. Handle with Care – Always lift tree by the root ball. Keep roots moist until planting.

3. Digging a Proper Hole – Dig 2 to 5 times wider than the diameter of the root ball with sloping sides to allow for proper root growth.

4. Planting Depth – The trunk flare should sit slightly above ground level and the top-most roots should be buried 1 to 2 inches.

5. Filling the Hole – Backfill with native soil unless it's all clay. Tamp in soil gently to fill large air spaces.

6. Mulch – Allow 1 to 2 inch clearance between the trunk and the mulch. Mulch should be 2 to 3 inches deep.

For more tree-planting tips and information, visit arborday.org.

Source:  **Arbor Day Foundation**
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JOIN IN REFORESTATION EFFORTS

Effects of the emerald ash borer and other invasive pests have driven a rising need for volunteers in the MetroParks. Volunteers are needed to help gather and prepare seeds, care for seedlings, plant trees and many more reforestation activities. To learn more, visit metroparks.org/forests or contact Kevin Kepler at (937) 275-PARK (7275) ext. 1212.

- Water your tree thoroughly after planting with about 15 gallons of water. Monitor your tree's water needs at least once a week for the first month.
- Stake the tree loosely for protection or support if needed. Use only soft, pliable tree ties. Do not use wire; it can cut into a trunk. If the trunk can't stand up on its own, stake it so that it stands upright. The stakes should be placed outside of the

root ball. Plan to remove stakes as soon as the tree can support itself, in 6 to 12 months.

- Cover the entire planting area with a 3 to 4-inch layer of mulch, but keep it 2 inches from the base of the trunk. Mulch keeps the topsoil temperate for root growth, reduces surface evaporation of water, slows or stops weed and grass growth around the tree's base, and prevents a hard crust from forming on the soil surface.

