

Planting Guidelines for Larger Trees and Shrubs

Preparation

Site conditions must be assessed and any ameliorative action taken before deciding choice of species, size of plant, best planting and staking methods and appropriate aftercare.

Although plants in containers can be left in their containers for quite long periods, they are best planted sooner rather than later. Bareroot plants should be planted as soon as possible after delivery. Clear weed growth around each planting position. If planting into clay or where excess water may be a problem, steps should be taken to prevent water ponding in the tree pits.

Planting

Dig a shallow pit (maximum 600mm depth) with a diameter of about 150-300mm greater than the diameter of the root system of the tree. Position stakes before planting – see below. Remove plant from container and tease out roots around edges of the rootball. If the plant is supplied with hessian and wire wrapped around the roots do NOT remove this material. It is there to protect the roots during planting and will rot away in a few months.

Take care to ensure that the root collar (i.e. the mark on the plant which shows previous ground level) is at ground level when planting is complete. Backfill with soil that was extracted, adding bonemeal and tree planting compost well mixed in with the soil. Water in well.

Staking

Avoid driving a stake through the rootball as this may damage the root system. Small trees can be supported with a single stake driven at a 45 degree angle, but for larger trees use 2 stakes, 1.8m or 2.4m, one either side of the tree, with a crossbar nailed between them.

Tying

When using a single stake, a single 45cm tie positioned at the top of the stake should be sufficient to prevent the tree chaffing against the top of the stake. Hold the tie in position with a nail into the stake.

For larger trees and container grown trees where 2 stakes are used, first fix a rubber block to the crossbar making sure the nail is driven home. Then fix the tree to the crossbar with a length of strapping that can be nailed to the crossbar, making sure that the tree is positioned against the rubber block.

Protection

Rabbits and deer guards should be fitted where necessary. Protection against sheep, cattle and horses is best attained by fencing.

Mulch and Weed Control

A weed free circle of 1m diameter should be created around the base of each tree and maintained for the first two years. This is particularly important where the tree is surrounded by grass. This can be achieved by hand-pulling, hoeing, using a mulch (e.g. bark), a mulch mat or by using herbicides. Mulching is particularly useful on lighter soils but can lead to problems on heavy or waterlogged soils where excess moisture is trapped below the surface resulting in root rot. Yews and Box should not be mulched as they are particularly prone to disease when moisture is trapped around the roots.

Watering

It is important to keep plants well watered during their first year, particularly in hot and dry weather, but don't over-water.