

Planting
In
El Dorado County

Most young trees, shrubs, roses, grapes, etc will be found in, (1) Containers, (2) "Balled Roots" or as (3) "Bare Roots" plants. If buying fruit trees select Semi-Dwarf size. Standard size are difficult to train to a manageable size. Dwarf trees may not produce the quality (flavor) of fruit you expect.

(1) Container plants may be planted at any time of the year, however, avoid the hot months of July and August if possible. Water plant the day before planting. If the container is metal, make 2 or 3 cuts from top to bottom of can to get it out.

Dig hole 1 1/2 times the diameter of the container to allow some roots to be straightened. Depth of hole is measured from soil line to the bottom of the container. The soil line of the trunk may be 1 to 3" above the ground line for planting. The soil line can be identified where the trunk becomes discolored from its original planting depth. Alternate Method, Dig hole 2-3" deeper than , sprinkle 2 cups of Triple Phosphate over the bottom and replace the 2-3" of soil and tamp to remove air pockets. Roots may be partially root-bound, so it may be necessary to hose off as much as an inch of soil from the sides and bottom to be able to straighten out some of the roots. Whatever soil was removed from the bottom, must be added back in the hole for proper depth. Cut any broken roots off just above the injury. Place tree in hole. If support stakes are necessary, two ties are required. It is very important the ties be as low as possible and still support the tree. Each year the ties must be lowered. After 3 years or less the root system has developed and the stakes and ties removed. The tree needs to constantly flex to develop a strong trunk. Refill hole 1/3 and tamp to remove air pockets. Repeat until soil is up to (b). Make shallow ditch around plant and water.

(2) "Balled" plants are handled much the same as container plants. The burlap ball must be kept damp and covered until planting.

Dig hole 2 times the diameter of the ball. The depth of hole is measured from soil line (b) to the bottom of the "ball". Set "ball" in middle of hole and check for proper depth. See Alternate Method above. Cut cords on burlap and spread it at least halfway or more down to the bottom of the hole. If plastic twine was used remove as much as possible. Insure that all twine is removed from around the trunk. Some roots may require straightening out around the "Ball". Stake is necessary as outlined for container plants. Shrubs may require only stake. The backfill soil should contain no more than 25% amendments (such as compost). Refill hole 1/3 and tamp remove air pockets. Repeat until soil is up (b).
Make shallow ditch around plant and water.

(3) "Bare Foot" is the most economical way to buy fruit or nut trees, berries, roses, and grape plants. A wide variety is available from early January to early February. Once home bare root plants must be covered completely with damp shavings, mulch, or soil. If you are planting the next day, the roots can be placed overnight in bucket of water. By inspecting the root system you can determine how large the diameter and depth of the hole must be.

Planting Selection. Select a tree with a trunk diameter between 1/2" and 3/4" in diameter. Any larger size will likely not have an adequate root system to support it, especially since the roots have been so shocked. On fruit trees be certain buds or branches have not been removed from the lower 16" of the trunk. Look for strong Graft Union that is Healing well.

Dig hole large enough to accommodate the roots when spread out. Do not dig the hole deeper than necessary. Make a cone shaped mound of dirt at as depicted in the diagram. Tamp well to shape.

Place tree on mound and check hole for size and depth. The soil line may be up to 3" above the Ground Line. Spread roots evenly around trunk.

Hold tree straight and start covering as soon as possible. The backfill soil should contain no more than 25% ammendments (such as compost). Tamp soil several times while filling the hole.

Taper soil from line on trunk out ground level. Tapering the soil allows better drainage around the trunk. This area should be dry, helps prevent incursion of insects.

Cut Fruit trees off at Knee Height!. Cut only fruit trees. Fruit trees should have lower branches for ease of training, pruning, spraying, and picking the fruit. It will also be stronger and mature early. Again, Do Not cut any other trees, including nut trees.

Make small trench around tree and water.

Cooperative Extension, El Dorado County