



New tree planting, Rooksbury Mill Nature Reserve Andover

Tree planting guidance

Planting a tree can be a very satisfying experience as it is a long term legacy for the future and will provide benefits to wildlife, you and other people as well as to the landscape and can improve an areas sense of place and quality. The main focus is to plant the right tree in the right place and this comes back to selection of the correct tree for the site and space available.

After selection of your tree, when to plant it

Generally you plant broadleaved trees from November to March during the dormant season and evergreen trees from February to April. Early season planting is preferable for most species and stock types as the soil is warmer which encourages root growth. Therefore plants

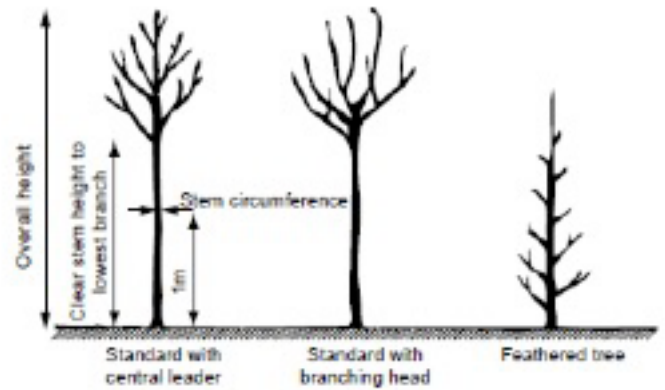
are afforded a longer period of time to establish new roots before spring. Never plant when snow is on the ground or during periods of hard frost.

Container grown stock can be planted at anytime, if there is water available as the tree will need regular watering. Root balled trees should only be planted within the recommended season.

In the following image are three common tree stock options when purchasing your tree, you can buy a standard with central leader and no lower branches, a standard with a branching head with no lower branches or a feathered tree which is one with low branches up the length of the trunk.

Preparations for planting

If you are planting a bare root tree, it is essential that the roots are prevented from drying out at all times (it takes less than 30 minutes for roots to be killed when exposed to the air, less in windy conditions).



Example tree stock options

| Type | Height | Girth | Suggested pit size (metres) |
|----------|-------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Light | 2.5 - 3.0m | 6-8cm | 1 x 1 x 0.5m deep |
| Standard | 2.5 - 3.0m | 8-10cm | 1 x 1 x 0.5m deep |
| Selected | 3.0 - 3.5m | 10-12cm | 1 x 1 x 0.75m deep |
| Heavy | 3.5 - 4.25m | 12-14cm | 1 x 1 x 0.75m deep |

It is important to prepare a large enough hole for the size of tree you are planting. The following table is a guide. The girth (stem circumference) is measured 1 metre from the ground.

Planting the tree

- Position the tree to avoid overhead cables or underground utilities (drains etc.) and in a location that it can grow to its full potential ensuring the right tree is planted in the right place.
- The base of the pit should be broken up to a depth of 15cm to aid drainage and soil improver can be added to aid with improving the ground conditions.
- Place any turf in the bottom of the pit but chop it up first.
- Add a slow release fertiliser or bone meal to the soil at the base of the planting pit to provide some additional nutrient for the tree roots as they develop.
- Before placing the tree in the pit remove any ties that have been used to tie the branches up during transportation.
- Prune any damaged branches off with clean sharp secateurs and remove crossing branches and competing leaders to ensure a well-spaced branch structure. It is easier to formative prune the tree prior to planting.
- Position the tree so that the stake is on the windward side.
- For bare rooted trees, spread the roots naturally in the pit, do not bend or cut them to fit. Check the roots of the tree and ensure they are evenly spaced and not crossing around the main trunk or each other as this can cause girdling as they develop. Straighten, cut or remove circling roots. Also remove any sacking material and wire baskets from the root system prior to planting.
- With container grown trees remember to remove the container if not biodegradable.
- Identify the trunk flare and this is where the trunk expands at the base of the tree. This point should be partially visible after the tree has been planted. Remove excess soil from the top of the root ball prior to planting if the root flare is not visible.
- Straighten the tree in the hole before backfilling as once planted it is hard to reposition the tree.
- The backfill should be of a suitable material to allow for drainage and root growth. The addition of bone meal to the backfill will provide a useful food source for the tree.
- Trees should be planted to the same depth that they were growing in the nursery (soil mark around the base of the stem), with a slight crown to the backfill.
- Nail ties to the stake (never to the tree) after fitting spacers to prevent the stem rubbing on the stake.
- Where vandalism is not a problem use a short stake with a single tie. This will encourage the tree to make good root and stem growth quickly because it will be able to sway a bit. Where vandalism is a problem, a taller stake should be used with two or three ties. The top tie should be within 5cm of the top of the stake. The stake should be driven into the undisturbed ground at the base of the pit.

Irrigation

At the time of planting a pipe or hose can be installed into the planting pit to aid with watering. This is often used for street tree planting for ease of watering.

Mulch around the base of the tree

At the time of planting create a mulch ring at least 0.5m radius around the tree. Mulch is organic matter spread around the base of a tree to hold moisture, moderate soil temperature extremes and reduce weed and grass competition. Do not spread this too thickly, around 2 inches is ideal and do not pile up around the trunk as this can cause decay of the living bark.

Aftercare

This aspect is often overlooked or ignored and is one of the main reasons why newly planted trees struggle or fail completely. The following provides brief guidance on the aftercare.

Weed control

The control of weeds and grass is essential as it reduces competition for nutrients and moisture. This is specially so for regularly mown lawns as these are extremely competitive. A minimum turf free area of 1m² is ideal. Weed control can be achieved by hand, mulching (e.g. shredded bark) or by using a plant mat, preferably a biodegradable one. If the tree has basal suckers or shoots, do not use herbicide to control weed growth as this could be transferred onto the lower foliage cause damage to the tree.

Watering

Newly planted trees generally require watering during dry periods particularly in the first summer after planting. During periods of water restriction bath water can be used. It is important to water throughout the year for at least the first 3 years following watering after planting if the weather is dry to ensure successful establishment of the trees.

Stakes and ties

These should be checked periodically to ensure they are not too tight or too loose. After 2-4, years when a tree should be established, short stakes can be removed. If a longer stake has been used, it should be gradually reduced in height over several years as the stem increases in girth before final removal. Check the stake and ties at least annually during the period of establishment and remove when necessary to avoid stem damage.

Formative pruning

This can be carried out when necessary to maintain a single leading shoot or to remove any dead, damaged, diseased or crossing branches.

There are British Standards for tree selection (BS3936_1), nursery stock and root balled tree guidance (BS4043) and these are available from www.standards.uk.com



Newly planted ornamental apple in Beech Hurst Park



Links for additional tree plating guidance

Woodland Trust - www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/help-and-support

Forestry Commission - www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-treecare-guide.pdf

Royal Horticultural Society - www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=237

Trees for Cities - www.treesforcities.org

Arboricultural Association - www.trees.org.uk/Book-Shop/Products/Guidance-Note-3

The Tree Council - www.treecouncil.org.uk/Take-Part/National-Tree-Week/Useful-Information

Useful contacts and references:

If you have any concerns regarding trees managed by Test Valley Borough Council - often land in public open spaces and parks - please contact Customer Services who will firstly confirm whether the land is indeed managed by the council.

Telephone 01264 368000 or 01794 527700 / Minicom 01264 368052

Test Valley Borough Council, Beech Hurst, Weyhill Road, Andover, Hampshire, SP10 3AJ www.testvalley.gov.uk

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