

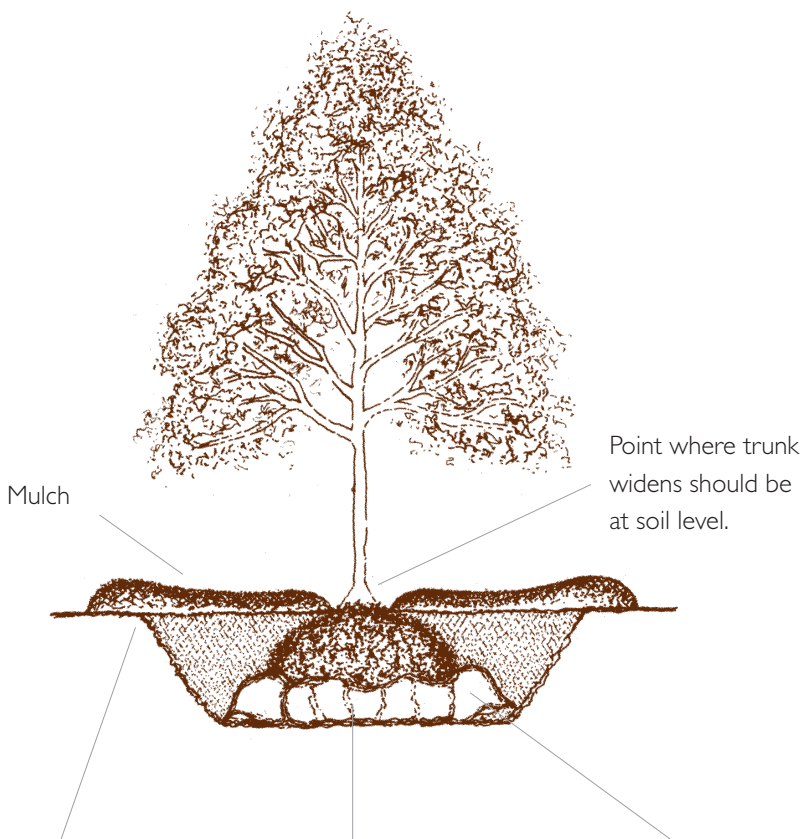
# PLANTING TREES

Plant a tree the right way so it has the best chance to thrive and will provide greater benefits throughout its life. Follow these tips to give your tree a good start. For more information and help selecting the right kind of tree, see [mortonarb.org/plantadvice](http://mortonarb.org/plantadvice).

Trees are measured by the caliper inch, meaning the diameter of the trunk in inches.

## A wide hole, not too deep

A tree needs a wide, shallow planting hole so it can spread out new roots. Trees that are balled and burlapped lose between 70 and 90 percent of their root mass when they are dug up for transplanting.



Dig the hole no deeper than the root ball and 2 to 3 times as wide. Wider is better.

When the tree is in the hole, remove as much wire or rope as you can reach.

Tuck the top  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the burlap down around the sides of the root ball. Fill in around root ball with soil that was removed.

## Ways to buy trees

Trees from nurseries come one of three ways: bare root, balled and burlapped (B&B), or potted (containerized).



Bare root Balled & burlapped (B&B) Potted

**Bare root trees** have exposed roots without any soil on them. The roots must be kept moist and covered because they can dry out quickly. Bare root trees are usually small—less than 2-inch caliper—and should be planted when dormant (late fall or early spring).

**Balled and burlapped trees** are dug up with some roots in a ball of soil that is then wrapped in burlap. The soil helps keep the roots moist.

**Potted trees** are becoming widely available. They can become rootbound, so remove the pot and carefully unwrap or even cut back circling roots when planting.

# MULCHING

A layer of mulch over its roots helps any tree grow and thrive. It is especially important for newly planted trees, but mulch is good for established trees, too. For more information, see [mortonarb.org/plantadvice](http://mortonarb.org/plantadvice).

A young tree that is mulched may grow twice as fast because it is better able to develop roots.

Mulch helps keep tree roots cool in the summer and holds moisture in the soil. It keeps lawn mowers and string trimmers safely away so they do not damage the tree's bark. Mulch also deters weeds and improves the soil as it breaks down.

Mulch should be made of plant material that will decompose over time.

The best material is chipped or shredded wood, although leaves and grass clippings can be used. Compost also makes a fine mulch. Do not use gravel or stone.

Spread mulch in a wide saucer shape around the tree's trunk.

Mulching imitates the way trees grow in nature. In the wild, the forest floor is covered with a layer of twigs, decomposing leaves, branches, and other dead plant matter.

In urban areas, trees do not have this natural mulch layer and often have to compete with turfgrass for nutrients and water. Replacing grass with mulch protects trees and helps them grow.

Maintaining a mulch layer over a tree's root zone is one of the most important and effective ways to help trees live long, healthy lives.

## The right way to mulch

- Spread as wide as possible
- 3 to 4 inches deep
- Saucer shape
- Keep clear of tree's bark



Spread mulch 3 to 4 inches deep in a wide circle around the tree trunk. Ideally, mulch should cover the whole area under the tree's branches. For newly planted trees, make the circle at least 4 to 6 feet across.

Form the mulch into a low saucer shape a little higher at the outer edge. This will contain rainwater so it can soak down to tree roots.

Make sure the mulch does not touch the tree's bark.

If there is a lawn under the tree, spread mulch right on top of it rather than digging out the grass. The grass beneath the mulch will die, which is better for the tree.

## Avoid these mistakes

- Don't mound mulch against trunk
- Don't let mulch touch bark
- Don't use synthetic materials, gravel, or stone



Never pile mulch against the trunk of a tree. It can trap moisture and cause the bark to rot, making the tree vulnerable to disease and insect problems.

Synthetic materials, gravel, and stone are not good insulators and do not break down to improve the soil.

Most tree roots are just below the soil surface. Typically, 90 percent are no deeper than 18 inches.