

Tree Planting Guide for Bare-rooted Trees

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Red Fern Farm



A note from Red Fern Farm...

In the wild only a small percentage of seeds sprout and grow into seedlings. Of these only a few ever reach adulthood. You can give your little tree a huge advantage by following these simple instructions.

Care of Bare-Rooted Trees

These trees should be kept dormant until planted. Their roots are enclosed in plastic with damp medium. To stay healthy the trees need to be kept cool, 40 – 50 degree. If you cannot plant them within a week or cannot keep them cool, temporarily plant the bundle of trees. You can keep them bundled, but make sure the roots are covered with moist soil or medium.

Site Selections

Most fruit and nut trees require a moist, well-drained soil. Chestnuts require a slightly acidic soil, but will tolerate dryer, sandier soil than many other trees. Persimmons, pawpaws, and pecans will tolerate a much wider range of soil conditions than most trees (including periodic flooding).

Spacing

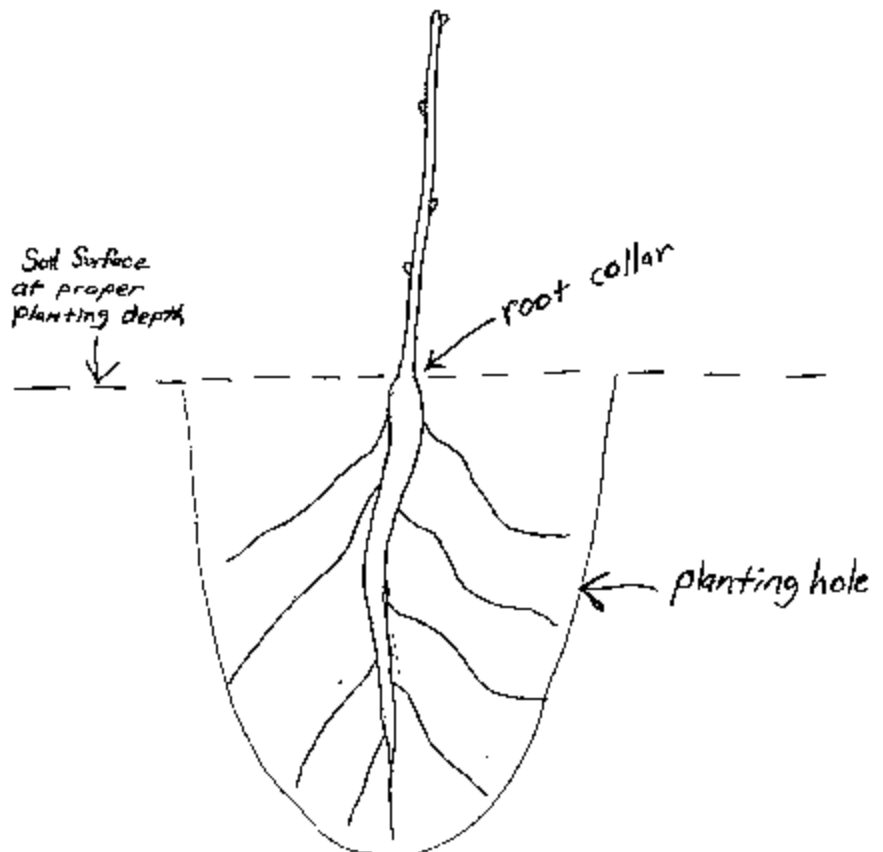
Most of these trees will do well with a 20 x 20 foot spacing in the beginning, but may need to be thinned to 20 x 40 foot or 40 x 40 foot by 20 years. Papaws are small trees and a 10 x 10 foot or even 10x 20 foot spacing may be better for them.

Pollination

All of these trees require cross pollination - that is, two or more are required to set fruit or nuts. Persimmons trees are either male or female, and one of each are usually required for fruit. Pecans and heartnuts come in two “types” (I and II). Both types produce both male and female parts, and both will produce nuts, but one of each type is required to pollinize each other—i.e. type I pollinizes type II, and type II pollinizes type I. Seedlings cannot be sexed or typed until they begin to flower

Planting

1. Dig a hole the depth of the root mass below the root collar, not deeper (see illustration).
2. Prune off long, stringy roots that hang down below the main root mass. The hole must be deep enough to accommodate the roots without any roots bunching together or bending up around the sides of the hole (see illustration).



3. Place tree roots in the hole and hold the tree at the correct planting depth with one hand, while you backfill the planting hole with loose soil from the planting site. Do not backfill with wet, cloddy soil or clay. Firm the soil around the roots by hand as you backfill, to keep the tree from settling deeper after planting.
4. Absolutely, resist the temptation to plant the tree “just a little deeper” than it grew in the nursery. The roots should go in the ground and the trunk—all of it—should be above ground. Burying just ½” of the trunk may be lethal to many trees. (See illustration).
5. Use mulch, landscape fabric, shallow cultivation, or herbicide to keep weeds, especially grasses, away from the tree until it is well established. This may take from two to five years, depending on the tree, the site, and the planting and maintenance. Keep the tree well watered the first season.

Maintenance

Improper or inadequate maintenance is the #1 reason for tree planting failure. Trees need to be protected from clumsy feet, mowers, deer, rabbits, and weed competition, especially grasses.

The cheapest, easiest way to achieve weed control is with chemicals such as Oust. Chemicals should only be applied by a professional - preferably by a consulting forester. Your local NRCS office can supply you with names if you need them. Another weed control possibility is to use a 3 foot square of landscape fabric topped with 2” layer of coarse wood chips. Use eight 6” turf staples to secure corners and edges of the fabric.

Shelters, tree protectors or tubes will protect trees from varmints, clumsy feet and mowers. Plantra www.plantra.com makes well-ventilated shelters that work well on chestnuts, heartnuts, persimmons and pecans. Pawpaws are very delicate when small and really need a 2’ tall tree shelter for protection from wind and sun as well as deer, rabbits, and mowers.

Keep the grass between the trees short, especially if shelters are on the trees. Tall grass/weeds use up a lot of moisture, but more seriously, they provide habitat for mice which may take up residence inside your tree shelters. Mice nesting inside tree shelters almost always girdle the trees, which will kill them.

Tom Wahl or Kathy Dice

319/729-5905

Red Fern Farm

13882 I Ave.

Wapello, IA 52653

tom@redfernfarm.com or kathy@redfernfarm.com www.redfernfarm.com

