



Instructions for Bare-root Chestnuts

(updated 4/10/18)

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 Preparation and Planting

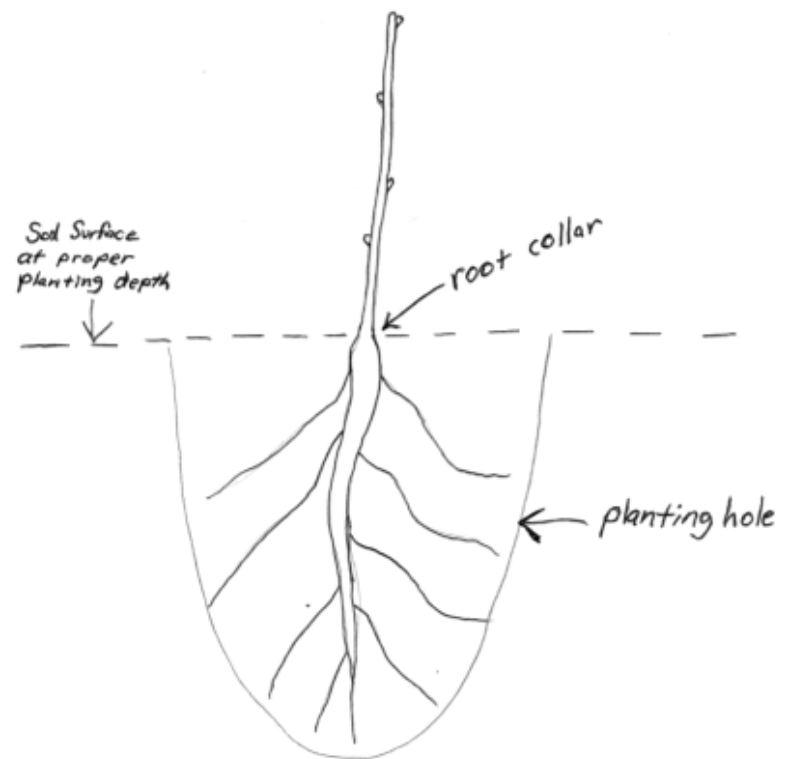
Chestnuts require a slightly acidic soil, but will tolerate dryer, sandier soil than many other trees. If planting into existing sod, make sure you kill any tall fescue, orchard grass, and alfalfa within 20' of where you want to grow trees, and kill any brome grass within 100'. A 3% or higher concentration of Roundup will work, if applied in the morning of a warm (70F or higher), sunny day. Re-seed the area with a mix of turf-type perennial rye grass (such as Manhattan IV or Elka), fine-leaved fescue such as creeping red fescue, hard fescue, or Chewings fescue, and medium Dutch white clover. If you are broadcasting, seed at 10 lbs. per acre *each* of the rye and fescue, and 1- 2 lbs. per acre for the clover.

Space chestnuts at 20' X 20' - that is, 20' apart within rows, and rows at 20' apart. This will amount to just over 100 trees per acre.

Lay out and flag the field ahead of time, using different colored flags for alternate row. A square grid will be easier to mow in future years.

Keep trees in the shade at all times, and keep the roots covered and moist. Take just a few trees at a time out of the bag, and put them in a five gallon bucket with enough water to cover the roots.

Dig a hole that accommodates the root system without crowding, folding, or bending roots around the sides of the hole. Prune off stringy, dangling roots that hang too far below the root mass. As you plant, hold the tree with one hand as you backfill with the other. Hold the tree with the root crown *exactly* even with the soil line. The root crown is the point at which the rusty bark color on the roots changes to the olive green color on the trunk. It is *very important* that



you not succumb to the temptation to plant the tree “just a little bit deeper.” Planting any part of the trunk below the soil line will kill the tree. Firm the soil around the tree first with your hand, then your toes—not your heel.

Apply a 5’ tall *vented* tree shelter (such as from www.plantra.com) if you have *any* deer or rabbits in the area. The tree shelter is a very good idea even if you don’t have any varmints to worry about, as it will make the tree become established and bear nuts sooner than it will without a shelter. Tree shelters will also save a great deal of pruning labor. Put tree shelters on the trees as soon as possible after planting - preferably within minutes. Rabbits like to snip unguarded trees and will do so within 30 minutes of planting.



Stakes for tree shelters need to be sturdy, and tall enough to reach within 6” of the top of the shelters after having been driven into the ground. 20’ long lengths of ½” rebar, cut to 72” long (20’ cut into thirds, with a little left over) are the cheapest, most durable stakes you can make. The second cheapest are 74” fiberglass Plantra tree stakes purchased at our farm. Steel 6 foot long “T” posts will also work, but take a lot of labor to drive.

Water the trees the first year, any time you go more than a week or two without at least an inch of rain.

Weed control is very important. The cheapest, easiest way to achieve this 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.

Keep the grass between the trees short, especially while 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.

If any of these instructions are unclear, or if you have any other questions, give us a call at 319-729-5905.

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