



Care for Potted Trees From Red Fern Farm

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One of the benefits of buying a potted tree is you DO NOT need to plant it right away. Our trees can be stored in their pots for weeks or months. Being planted into their permanent home is best, but if weather conditions are wrong or you don't have time to do the job correctly, it is fine to wait. Here are tips for caring for the trees.

Sun and Shade: All of our potted trees are grown under 30% shade cloth (60% for pawpaws). As such they can be scalded by direct sunlight in less than 30 minutes. The trees can handle early morning and late afternoon sun, or direct sun after September 15 (think low angle sunlight). You can store your trees under the shade of a large tree. Beware of late afternoon sunlight hitting the black pots and overheating the soil surface. Letting them receive early morning light is fine and will help them adapt to direct light. This is important if you plan to plant without a tree protector/tube/shelter. We do not recommend planting without protection.



Watering: There are multiple factors that affect how often you may need to water a tree in a pot, including (but not limited to) temperature, humidity, wind, sun, size of tree, and size of pot. It could range from once every two weeks up to every other day.

Watch the trees carefully and check them every day. Their leaves should be held horizontally. If you see a tree that is "flagging" or letting its leaves droop down vertically, that is a sign of moisture stress and that tree needs water ASAP. Check the largest tree in each tray (that's the one most likely to get dry first) by lifting it out and "hefting" it. If it feels light, give it water. You can also look at/feel the growing medium through the holes in the bottom of the pot. If it looks/feels dry it's time to water.



Happy, well-watered trees on left. Tree showing water stress, "flagging" leaves on right.

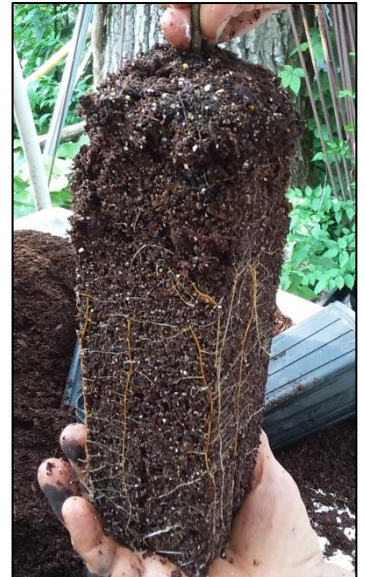
The easiest way to water these trees is to buy a tub for mixing concrete at Lowe's or Menards, and keep right next to your trees and keep it filled with water. When you need to water a tray, just set it in

the tub and let it soak for 5 minutes or so. The next best way is to water pots individually in a 5 gallon bucket. The most difficult, least effective way to water them is to sprinkle water down on them from above. It takes much more water that way, and may not work. The leaves on the trees act like umbrellas and shed the water. Also, once the growing medium gets really dry, it is very difficult to get it wet again unless you soak it in a tub of water. Once a pot gets really dry, you could sprinkle 100 gallons of water on it and it will just go right through without wetting the medium. 5 minutes in a bucket or tub is really the only way at that point.

Root Growth: Our pots are designed to allow the roots to air prune and thus avoid roots circling in the pots. The pots need to be raised off the ground so air can circulate underneath the pots and trays to allow air pruning. This also avoids the trees rooting into the ground through the pot drainage holes. If your pots will be sitting around for a week or less, this is not a worry. If you are storing your potted trees for more than two weeks, it would be best to get them off the ground. You can use bricks, 2x4s or any scrap wood around to elevate the trays with their pots. A height of just one inch is sufficient.



Bottom of "small" pot showing air pruned roots.



Nice root development due to air pruning of roots.

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