

How to Plant a Tree or Shrub



Trees are important for not only giving your yard areas shade and more privacy, but also for dampening noises, decreasing pollution and releasing oxygen. **Shrubs** also add textural and design elements to your landscape, giving it a stunning and manicured appearance. For beginners looking to makeover their outdoor spaces for the season, Tractor Supply is here with the **landscaping, lawn and garden** essentials to create stunning, one-of-a-kind backyard and front porch landscape designs.

When's the Best Time to Plant Trees or Shrubs?

It's generally recommended to plant them in the fall, allowing you to work in cool conditions and with **soils** and other ground materials before they freeze. They can also be planted in early spring or late winter if grounds thaw out enough for planting. Lower temperatures assist with establishing root systems, so it's worth waiting for colder weather to arrive before planting your tree or bush.

Select the Right Tree or Shrub

Not all trees and shrubs will thrive in certain areas, as many require conditions that can only be achieved in specific climates and temperatures. Because of this, you'll want to research the plants and trees native to your area to see which types grow best.

The U.S. is home to a variety of different growing zones, which are measured on a scale to show how well certain plants hold up through snowy winter conditions. You must ensure the plants you pick have the correct USDA growing zone for your area. The lower the hardiness zone rating, the better it will survive in cold temperatures.

For instance, plants with a rating of **3** can withstand temperatures ranging from -40 to -30 degrees Fahrenheit. On the other hand, if your plant falls higher on the rating scale, such as a **9** or **10**, it will be more suitable for standing up against hot, humid conditions. It can help to look around your local town and neighbor's yards to see the kinds of plants and trees that thrive in your area – this makes it easy to identify what you need.

When finding a tree, you should not only think about compatible growing conditions, but also the type of tree you want in your yard. Do you need something that provides ample shade against harsh summer sun, such as a **dogwood** or **oak tree**? Maybe you desire a tree that produces stunning blooms and delicious fruits, such as a **pear tree**, adding a fun element and attracting various wildlife to your space. For shrubs, such as **azaleas** or **hydrangeas**, you must make sure they're suitable for planting before you leave the store. It can help to carefully remove plants from their containers as you browse so you can see if roots are healthy and can be planted before buying.

Find a Good Location for Your Plant

The next step is finding a location for your plant in your yard. Trees and shrubs have many different growing requirements, with some options needing varying levels of shade and sun. For instance, **fruit trees** and certain shrubs may require **full sun**, which equates to about six hours each day. **Part sun to full shade** means your plant needs less than three hours of sunlight each day, while **full sun to part shade** plants require only three to six hours of sunlight. You can also find plants that thrive in **shade only**.

Because of this, the location you choose should be compatible with your plant's growing requirements. So, if your tree or shrub requires full sun to part shade, you shouldn't put it in the shadiest spot of your backyard.

You should also consider the size of your tree when it's done growing, as this will tell you how much space it will take up in your yard. You don't want to plant trees too close to your home, as downed limbs or trees can put your roof or foundation at risk. You also must make sure their maturity height won't reach into wires or other obstacles.

Additionally, you must think about underground utility lines on your property before digging and planting trees or shrubs, knowing where they are so you can avoid hitting them. Before starting your

landscaping project, consider calling '811.' This free service connects to a federal call center, where homeowners and professionals can schedule a grounds inspection. As professionals inspect your backyard, they will mark the areas where you have utility lines, allowing you to steer clear with ease.

Start Yard Prep and Get Trees or Shrubs Ready for Planting

After selecting the right tree and location, you're ready to begin groundwork prep! But first, you should gather a few supplies, such as **gardening gloves**, to keep hands clean and protected from dirt and scratches. You should also have a **wheelbarrow** or **tarp**, giving you somewhere to store and collect excess soil as you dig. For shrubs, you must water them in their nursery pots before digging and placing them in the ground.

Start by measuring your tree's root ball and multiplying this number by two or three. You should dig holes to this width, and holes should be deep enough to fit the root ball. As you dig, be sure to put leftover soil and dirt into wheelbarrows or on tarps.

Next, prepare the hole by breaking up the soils in it, allowing root systems to grow healthy and efficiently. To do this, all you need is a **shovel**, taking the end of it and poking it around the hole's sides to loosen soils and break them down. For soils with high clay content, you'll need other tools, such as a **garden rake**, to break up glazing. When digging holes, you must create a platform to set plants on within it, digging out the sides and keeping the center raised. This forms a cone-like shape, with the raised portion in the center, giving you a designated area to set trees on.

Now, you want to prep your tree for placement. If your tree's roots come wrapped in burlap, you'll need to remove the material before planting. Trees in regular pots can be carefully taken out and placed into holes. You should make sure to loosen up root balls using your fingers or a shovel before putting them into the holes.

Plant! Plant! Plant!

After prepping your hole and tree, it's now time to plant! When lifting trees, you should carefully grab them by their root balls, using your hand or shovel – never carry trees by their trunks. This avoids snapping or damage that may occur while lifting from these parts. You should place trees in that raised center section of the hole, allowing roots to disperse themselves throughout as they grow.

You must ensure that the crown of the tree's root ball sits level and flush with the ground. If not, take the tree back out and add or remove **soil**. Before filling the hole, you want to make sure the tree sits straight, with some young trees needing **stakes** to keep them upright as they grow.

Once your tree is in the ground and properly aligned, you can begin filling the hole using the soil you've collected in your **wheelbarrow** or **tarp**. You should only fill holes until they reach the top of the root ball, and be sure to avoid over-filling and compressing them to keep roots loose enough for growth.

Use other materials, such as **rubber** or **wood mulch**, to prevent water from collecting around the tree. It's also recommended to pack dirt around the trunk to form a moat, which absorbs water as it sits. Additionally, consider top-dressing soils with **soil amendments**, compost and other organic materials to assist in growth.

Water Your Trees or Shrubs

Just like with growing conditions, different plants and shrubs will have varying requirements for watering and other care tasks. Maintenance for your tree starts as soon as you plant it, and how you care for it during its first few years determines how well it grows and how long it will live.

You should give trees their first watering right after planting, continuing to water them **once per week** throughout their first growing season. After this, you should only water them if you notice a

lack of rain during summer or especially **dry soil conditions**. For shrubs, you must give them a generous watering immediately after planting.

When applying water, you want it to reach deep into the soils and roots, regardless of if you're planting a tree or shrub. To achieve this, consider using a **soaker garden hose**, which provide water to roots directly. You can also use a stakes **drip irrigation system** for shrubs, helping to slowly trickle water to allow time to soak into the ground. If you're planting a shrub in dry conditions, you need to water plants heavily at least two or three times per week, until it becomes established.

Use Fertilizers and Perform Other Care Tasks for Your Plants

Fertilizing your plants can help trees and shrubs grow quickly and remain healthy. Some tree types, such as fruit trees, may require a **fertilizer**, allowing it produce stunning blooms and delicious fruits.

As a general rule, you should wait to fertilize trees until they reach two or three years of age, ensuring to follow all instructions. Only apply fertilizers during late April, early May or late fall for both trees and shrubs. You should also add a plant starter solution as soon as you're done planting your shrub.

Additionally, when first planting your tree, you should use a hand **pruner** or **utility knife** to prune and cut away at any unhealthy, deceased or broken limbs that likely won't grow over time. However, you should wait to complete more serious pruning until your tree reaches at least one year. For shrubs, you can prune away any unbranched and long stems after planting and long after to keep them looking fresh. Depending on the type of plant, you may notice blooms forming in **spring**, with some options offering lasting florals throughout **summer** and **fall**. You can also find **year-round** blooming plants to give your yard an extra touch of style through every season.

Find Abundant Plant Care Accessories at Tractor Supply

Whether you're a homeowner wanting to make your landscape stand out amongst the neighborhood or a professional needing heavy-duty tools for large landscaping projects, we carry the supplies you need to achieve a healthy, great-looking lawn. To learn more about our selection of **plant care accessories**, visit your **local Tractor Supply store** today or browse online.