

# Root Pruning

## A Must Do Before Planting!

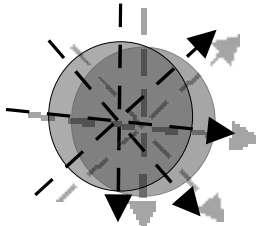
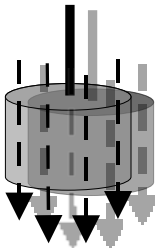
The most important step before you plant your new container-grown tree or shrub is to root prune the root ball to correct matted/circling roots. This is true for any size container-grown plant material, from a #1 to a #25 pot. Root prune aggressively!

### Steps to proper Root Pruning:

1. Remove the plant from the container by sliding the pot off of the root ball.
2. Use a sharp utility knife to slice into the root ball making 1" deep cuts from top to bottom every 2" to eliminate circling or heavily matted roots.
3. Lay the plant down and slice the bottom of the root ball in a star pattern 1" deep.

#### Side View:

Make your cuts at least 1" deep, every 2" around the root ball.



#### Bottom View:

A star pattern of cuts 1" deep across the bottom of the root ball.

Root pruning will help to eliminate circling roots that could strangle your plants in future years, causing premature death. Root pruning will stimulate new root growth and help your plant to establish an open and vigorous root system more quickly in its new location. Be aggressive. You will be helping, not hurting, the future of your plant.

# Preparing for Winter

## Protecting your plants from a Midwest Winter

- Water plants thoroughly prior to the soil freezing to help prevent winter burn. Evergreens that experience winter wind and sun damage year after year should be replaced with winter burn resistant varieties. Visit our website for information on tougher evergreen varieties.
- Prevent sunscald and animal damage to young trees or thin-barked species by wrapping the trunks from the base of the tree up to 4 or 5 feet with white plastic spiral tree wraps. Thin-barked trees - including maples, fruit trees and honeylocusts - may require wrapping for several winters before they grow into their mature, thicker, more textured bark. These wraps keep rodents and rabbits from chewing bark, discourage deer antler rubbing, and deflect sun bouncing off snow. Remove wraps in spring and re-install in fall to avoid attracting insects, and/or choking the tree bark as it actively grows.
- A 2" to 4" layer of wood/bark mulch will reduce repeated freezing and thawing in late winter, which can damage new root systems. Where mulch touches the trunks of trees and shrubs reduce thickness to 1" to avoid rotting the bark.

▪ We have talented designers on staff to help you with any of your Landscape Design needs. Call to set up an appointment today!  
▪ Make it super simple - Hire us to plant for you! - Our planting crew will insure that your plants get off to the best possible start!

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**Open April-November**

# Knecht's Nurseries & Landscaping

## PLANTING & CARE GUIDE

### FOR POTTED PLANT MATERIAL



### Planting Instructions

- *Root Pruning*
- *Soil Amendment*
- *Mulching & Staking*
- *Preparing for Winter*

#### Call Before You Dig!

Gopher State One Call  
651-454-0002 / 800-252-1166  
[www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org)

# *Planting Instructions*

## *The proper steps to planting container grown plant material*

### ***Digging The Hole:***

We recommend that the hole be dug **at least** twice as wide as the root ball and only as deep as the root ball height. Back filling will provide loose soil around the root ball, allowing the freshly pruned roots to grow easily into the surrounding soil.

### ***Root Pruning: A MUST DO!***

Please see “Root Pruning, A Must Do Before Planting” on the back of this sheet.

### ***Planting Depth:***

Planting depth is a very important part of the planting process. It is much safer to err on the side of slightly too high rather than too deep. Plant so that the root ball surface is slightly (1/2”) higher than or even with the ground around it. Some symptoms of planting too deep are stunted growth, deformed trunk, rotting bark, and a slow death.

### ***Back Filling & Soil Amendments:***

With the plant at the proper depth, you should back fill using the original soil dug from the hole. Most plants will do fine in the soil you have, with a little fertilizer added. Heavy, compacted, or poor soils may benefit from the addition of some soil amendments like compost, peat moss, fertilizer, sand or black dirt. Blend your soil amendment(s) with the soil dug from the hole at a rate of only 20 to 30%; back fill with this mixture. Too much soil amendment may prevent good establishment.

Some plants prefer a specific type of soil to thrive. For example, blueberry, magnolia,

azalea, rhododendron and other plants require a more acidic soil. To increase acidity we recommend that you amend the planting site soil as thoroughly as possible with sphagnum peat moss to provide the acidity needed.

### ***Creating a watering ring dike:***

Once planted, make a 1” to 3” high ring dike of soil around the plant, slightly wider than the root ball to keep water where it will soak into the root zone. You will place your mulch right over the top of this soil ring dike to prevent the dike from washing away during the first year. After a year, pull back the mulch, smooth out the remaining soil ring, and replace the mulch.

### ***Mulching:***

Mulch provides your plants with many benefits. We recommend that plants be mulched immediately after planting. A 2”-4” layer of mulch (shredded bark or wood chips are ideal) will help retain soil moisture, prevent wide fluctuations in soil temperature in the root zone, suppress most weed growth, and prevent mechanical damage by keeping weed whips and mowers from nicking the bark. In most cases place organic mulches directly on the soil surface. **Before placing mulch, kill all weeds and grass to prevent re-sprouting.** If you are using rock mulch we recommend you use a quality porous landscape fabric under the rock rather than heavy-duty plastic. Gases, water, and nutrients are able to move through porous landscape fabric; plastic does not allow this.

### ***Watering:***

Proper watering is extremely important, especially in the first few months. We have very detailed watering instructions on the blue sheet. Please follow them closely. Consistent, but not excessive watering is key to success. Be aware that you can drown plants by over watering.

### ***Recycling:***

Please return pots and fiberglass stakes to the nursery. We appreciate it and will reuse or recycle them. This keeps plastic out of the landfills and our planet a bit greener.

### ***Fertilizing:***

In most situations, a modest dose of fertilizer at planting time will help plants establish more quickly, **DO NOT OVER FERTILIZE!!!** Spring is a great time to fertilize, when plants have their greatest need for nutrients. Apply either a 3 to 6 month time-release fertilizer to the soil’s surface around the base of your plant(s), or a water-soluble fertilizer that you apply as you water (about once a month). We do not recommend that you continue to actively fertilize after August 1<sup>st</sup>, because the plants need to wind down to dormancy in preparation for winter.

### ***Insect Control:***

A proactive approach to insect and disease control is wise to prevent damage to plants susceptible to boring insects and other pests. Emerald Ash Borer, Viburnum Crown Borer, Bronze Birch Borer, Oak Borer, Aphids, Scale, White Flies, Fungus, Mildew and Mites are examples. Knechts’ staff can answer questions you may have about control measures. There are many products available to control pests and diseases, both organic and conventional.

### ***Staking:***

For plants that won’t stand straight, staking for a limited time, not to exceed one year, can be beneficial. Staking allows plants to establish a strong root system in the surrounding soil without tearing new tender roots during storms, and helps assure a straight tree. Remove all staking materials after a year or re-tie them to accommodate any new growth that has occurred.