

Planting Potted Trees and Shrubs



Plants grown in pots have more roots, which usually makes them more likely to survive once planted. They can be planted year-round as long as the ground is not frozen. New plants need plenty of water, so fall is the best time to plant. Trees or shrubs planted in the fall have time to grow their roots over the winter and spring before the hot summer weather arrives. If you can't plant in fall, later in winter or early spring are the next best options. Follow these steps to plant your new tree or shrub:



Dig a hole that is the same depth as the pot and twice as wide. Scrape the sides of the hole with your shovel. This will loosen up the dirt and make it easier for the plant's roots to spread out.



Carefully take the plant out of the pot. If it doesn't slide out easily, place the pot on its side and roll it on the ground while pressing on it with your hands. This should loosen up the roots and help the plant slide out of the pot.



Once the plant is out of the pot, carefully loosen the roots with your hands. Gently pull at tangled roots to straighten them, so they will grow away from the tree. Try to keep as much dirt as possible on the roots.



If the roots are very tangled, you can cut an X on the bottom of the root ball with a small shovel, along with four cuts down the sides of the root ball.



Find the root flare. This is the place where the main stem is wider, just above where the roots start.



Place the plant in the hole. The main stem should be straight up and down — make sure to look at it from each side. The root flare should be above the ground and the roots should have enough room so that they aren't bent up at the bottom of the hole.



Fill the hole with the dirt that you dug up. Break up any big clumps of dirt, and don't put any grass in the hole. Pat the soil down firmly with your hands to make sure that there are no air pockets. The dirt should be at the same level as the ground all around it.



Water your new plant. The dirt should be moist but not soggy.



Spread a ring of mulch around the plant. The mulch should be 2 inches deep. Make sure to keep it a hand's width away from the main stem of the plant.