

## Tree Planting

### Choose the right time

Trees should be dormant, usually between November and March. It's also best to plant when it's not too wet or cold.

### Prepare the tree

**Storage** After receiving the tree from the nursery, roots must be kept cool (38-45 oF / 3-7 oC) and moist until planting. If they have become dry, soak the roots for up to two hours in a bucket of water.

**Pruning** Prune any branches or roots broken in transit using secateurs. It is best not to cut back longer roots, as channels can be dug to accommodate them during planting.

### Site Preparation

Don't bother pre-digging the hole as this isn't great for the soil structure. If you are going to mound plant, you'll need to bring in soil for that. Do however weed the site in advance and mark the tree planting spots with canes.

### Dig the hole

1. Lay mulch-mat next to intended hole.
2. Locate centre of hole.
3. Cut a square of turf (3 x 3 standard spade widths) around this centre.
4. Remove turf layer, lay on mulch-mat. Cutting turf layer into quarter will make this easier.
5. Dig a square hole one spade depth, mound soil onto mulch-mat. Easier to remove from the mat than mixed into grass.
6. Lay turf upside-down at bottom of hole. The grass will break down and feed the roots of the tree.
7. Roughen sides of hole with fork. This will help roots to penetrate the soil.

### Stakes

Unguarded tree: Point angled stakes into prevailing wind OR put 180cm upright stake on same side as prevailing wind. Stake should be below lowest branch or well away from branches.

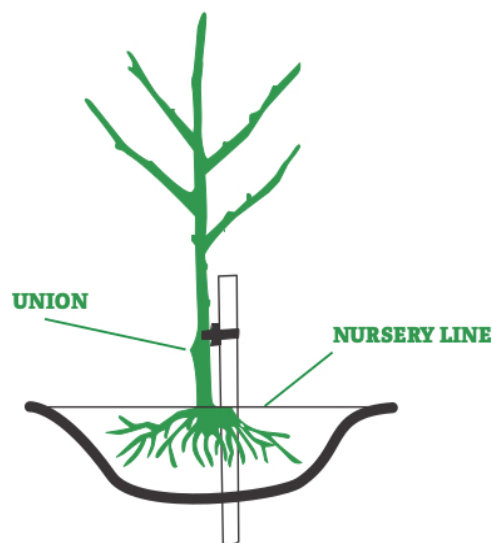
Guarded tree: Drive in two 240cm stakes three spade widths apart, depending on guards being used.

### Plant the tree

1. Dip root ball in bucket of water.
2. Hold tree in centre of hole. It's much easier to ask someone else to do this while you do the next steps.
3. Arrange the roots so they are positioned as they grew in the nursery. Cut channels into soil for longer roots.
4. Position strongest roots towards wind origin. This is so that the root does not snap in a strong wind.
5. Position tree at correct depth. Try and match the soil line on the tree with the top of the hole. Make sure the graft union is at least 10cm above soil to prevent scion root growth or rotting.
6. Back fill soil under roots until supported in natural position.
7. Sprinkle mycorrhizal mix on roots filaments.
8. Fill in the rest of the hole with soil from mulch mat pile.
9. Press out air holes (without compacting soil). Better done with hands than feet!
10. Water the tree with one watering can, allow water to drain.



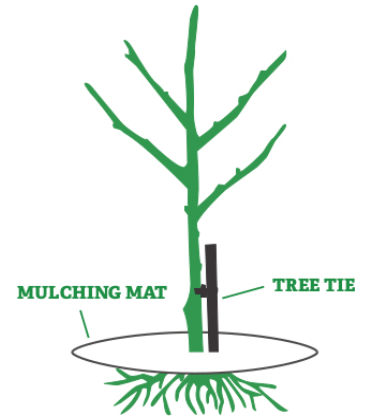
*Trim off long, damaged tap roots with secateurs*



## Mulch!

Cut and place mulch-mat around base of tree. Biodegradable mulch mats made of coir or felt are available or you could use cardboard.

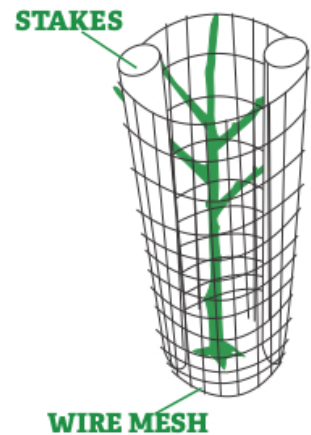
Cover mulch-mat with 1m circle of woodchip, 8-10cm thick. Leave an empty donut space around the trunk to prevent rot or the stimulation of scion root growth.



## Attach guards

The final step is to fit the appropriate guarding system around your tree. If the primary threat is small animals, then a small plastic guard should be sufficient. These should also protect from accidental damage from clumsy use of strimmers.

If the threat is larger animals and/or humans (accidental or outright vandalism) then a more robust guarding system will be necessary. Sheets of steel mesh attached to two 180cm stakes with fencing staples is sufficient to deter most tree 'predators'. If such a system is used a small hatch can be cut into the mesh to allow weeding and mulching. Note that cut wire mesh will leave sharp edges that must either be ground down, or protected with a thick tape or rubber (such as inner tubes attached with cable ties).



## Fruit Tree Aftercare – 2-3 years

### Watering

For the first two years it is vitally important not only to provide enough water to the roots, but to provide it in the right place at the right rate. The recommended regime is:

- 10 litres a week per tree throughout the growing season (late March to early November)
- Fully soak the roots once a week rather than spreading watering over a number of days
- Estimate the extent of the roots and water around the edge of the root circle rather than close to the trunk – usually 1.5 canopy width



### Weeding

As the root system of the tree is developing it is preferable to remove competition from grasses and aggressive pioneer plants such as dock and dandelion. Do not restrict weeding to the small area within the tree guard.

### Formative Pruning

See Pruning Young Trees.

### Thinning

Remove fruitlets during the first couple of years after planting to help tree focus its energy on establishing roots.

### Guard Reduction

Start reducing the level of the guard as soon possible. Alternatively, holes can be created in the mesh to accommodate longer branches. Either way, the sharp wire edges will need to be protected.

### Feeding

Feed the soil food web, rather than the tree itself, e.g. add weed clippings, humanure, woodchip.

### Mulching

Maintaining a wide mulch circle during the first few years of tree establishment:

- Suppression of weeds.
- Conservation of soil moisture.
- Keeps soil cool in summer and protects from frost in winter.
- Development of soil food web.
- Slow release of nutrients into the soil.
- Deters use of strimmers too close to the trunk of the tree.

Use chipped wood or any green waste.

