



Hands On
NETWORK

Project: Plant a Tree

A new tree is an investment that can last a lifetime. Position it carefully since it will be around for years and its large size makes poor placement a major headache. When planting a tree, know its maximum height and spread, information that is usually located on the label. Plant it far enough away from houses, outbuildings, power lines and other permanent structures so that even when mature, the tree will not touch these items.

Also be sure to plant a tree far enough away from other trees or it may grow leaning away from the others, trying to get maximum light. Fall is the best time to plant a tree, but you can also plant a tree in the spring. Whenever you plant, avoid hot, sunny days.

Service Project Instructions

Suggested Age Group: children, teens, adults

Suggested Number of Volunteers: 2-3 per tree

Skill Level: easy

Activity Time: 3 hours (depending on the amount of trees)

Materials Needed:

- Spade
- Hand pruning shears
- Scissors
- Hose
- Tree
- Mulch

Activity Instructions:

1. Dig the hole four times as wide as the root ball but slightly less than its depth to minimize settling. Make a mound in the center to support the trunk and to encourage the roots to spread
2. If the tree is bare-root, position it on the mound. If it is in a container, knock it

from the container if possible. If that is too difficult, cut away the container with hand shears. If the tree is balled and wrapped in burlap, you will have to decide whether to partially or completely remove the burlap. If the burlap is treated or plasticized, remove it completely. If it is natural burlap, loosen it from the root ball of the tree, and then drop it in your planting hole. The natural burlap will disintegrate.

3. Loosen any roots that encircle the root ball. Position the tree in the hole, putting it at the same level it was in the container or burlap. (In a large hole, check to see if the tree is level with the surrounding soil by laying a long-handled rake or spade across the hole.) Fill the hole halfway with soil – there is no need to add any soil amendments – and water, gently. Fill the hole completely and form a saucer around the tree to retain water. Fill the saucer with water, let it drain and then fill it again. Mulch with a 2-3-inch-deep layer of wood chips to conserve moisture and prevent competition from weeds and grass. The mulch should go out as far as the tree's branches. Keep it well watered for the first two weeks, and give it additional water during dry spells for the next two to three years.

Additional Resources

Plant a tree across the globe or give a tree as a gift:

<http://plantabillion.org/>

Learn more about how to plant trees by visiting

<http://www.treehelp.com/howto/howto-plant-a-tree.asp>.

Reflection

After your volunteer project, it is important to reflect on the experience – to think about what you did, what you learned from it and the impact it had. Here are some suggested activities:

- Tell your family and friends about something you learned and how you will continue to help others.
- Draw a picture, write a poem or create a jingle about the service activity.
- Write about your experience on your blog, Facebook account or Twitter.
- If you are working with a group of volunteers to do this project, lead a group discussion with questions such as:
 - Why did you volunteer today?
 - What did you learn about the environment and helping the community?
 - What is the one thing you will remember most about this service activity?
 - How can you continue to make a difference in our community?