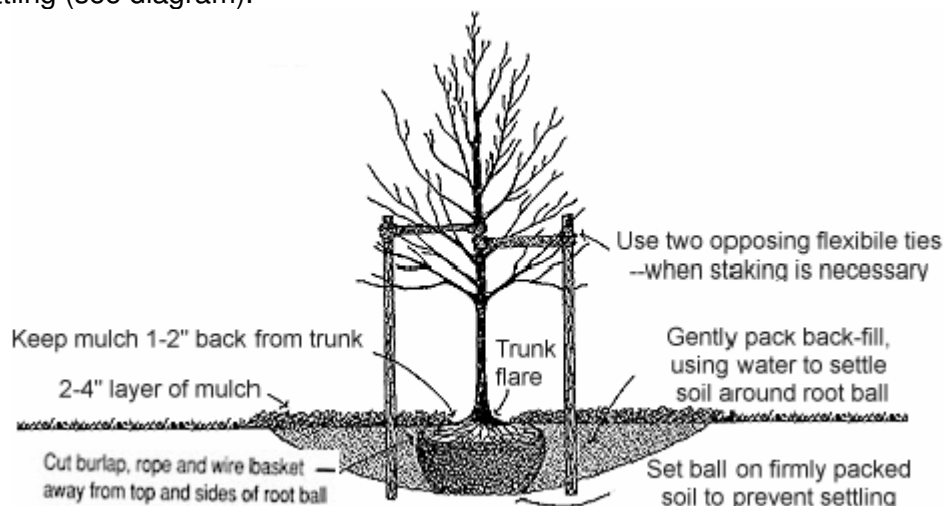


## How to Properly Plant a “Ball & Burlap” Tree in Marion County

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1. **Select an appropriate tree for your location (Right Tree, Right Place):** Use a tree that will grow well under local environmental conditions and provide it with plenty of space to grow. This includes both vertical and horizontal space for the mature size of the tree and plenty of room for root growth. Avoid planting large maturing trees near power lines.
2. **Dig hole at least 1 ½ to twice as wide as root ball:** Wide areas give roots a place to spread and grow. Dig hole 3 to 4 inches shallower than depth of root ball to keep tree from settling too deep. Rough up sides of hole to allow for root penetration into surrounding soil.
3. **Prune tree to remove problems and remove tags:** Remove dead, broken, and diseased branches as well as crushed and girdling roots. Remove water sprouts or suckers. Remove any plastic or unnatural materials from branches of tree.
4. **Identify root flare:** Pull back burlap from trunk of tree and look for root flare. This is the wider area at the base of tree trunk where roots begin. If the root flare is not visible, you will need to carefully remove soil from the top of root ball. The flare should be partially visible after tree has been planted (see diagram).
5. **Adjust hole to proper depth:** Measure from root flare to bottom of root ball to determine how deep hole should be. Add or remove dirt from hole as necessary and compact bottom of hole. The majority of roots on a newly planted tree will develop in the top 12 inches of soil. If tree is planted too deep, new roots will have difficulty developing due to a lack of oxygen. It is better to plant the tree a little high. This will allow for some settling (see diagram).



6. **Remove bottom of Wire Basket:** Remove bottom of wire basket using bolt cutters. Leave at least 2 horizontal rings of basket to help prevent root ball damage and to maneuver tree.
7. **Place tree into hole:** Push or place the ball of tree gently into hole while using trunk to guide it. Do not drag or drop tree roughly into hole.
8. **Straighten tree in hole:** View tree from several directions to confirm tree is straight. Straighten tree by maneuvering root ball (do not push or pull on trunk of tree).
9. **Remove root wrapping:** Remove remainder of wire basket from around sides of root ball, being careful not to move root ball. Use bolt cutters to cut a seam along one side of wire basket and completely remove. Cut off as much burlap as possible and remove from hole. Re-check tree to be sure it is positioned correctly. Re-position if necessary.
10. **Fill hole with soil that came out of hole:** Be careful not to damage trunk or roots in the process. Firmly pack soil while filling to eliminate air pockets which may cause roots to dry out. It is best to add a few inches of soil and settle with water, alternating this process until hole is filled and tree is firmly planted. It is not recommended to apply fertilizer at the time of planting.
11. **Mulch to width of planting hole around base of tree (minimum):** Mulch is simply organic matter that acts as a blanket to hold moisture and moderate soil temperature extremes, both hot and cold, and to reduce competition from grass and weeds. A 2 to 4 inch layer is ideal. More than 4 inches may cause a problem with oxygen and moisture levels. When placing mulch, care should be taken not to cover actual trunk of tree as this may cause decay in the living bark. A mulch-free area, 1 to 2 inches wide, is sufficient to avoid moist bark conditions and prevent decay.
12. **Follow-up care:** Keep soil moist but not soaked. Over watering will cause leaves to turn yellow and/or fall off. Water trees at least once a week, barring rain, and water more frequently during hot weather. When soil is dry below the surface of the mulch, it is time to water. Continue until mid-fall, tapering off for lower temperatures when less water is required. Rule-of-thumb: A newly planted tree requires 6 - 8 gallons of water per diameter inch of trunk per week. A thorough soaking is much better than light, frequent watering. Consider 1" per week naturally or supplemental.

Staking is only necessary to support loosely planted trees that will not stand on their own after planting. Remove staking after 1 year.

13. **Protect the tree from animals (including humans):** Plastic, expanding tree wraps are ideal for protection against tree enemies. Deer and other furry creatures will eat your tree if it is not protected. Weed-whackers and mowers will kill your tree in an instant.

