



Gift to Nature Tree Planting Guide

Tree planting season – between November and March

Things to consider:

- Think carefully about where to plant your tree; consider current and future use, and ownership of the land.
- Trees should not be planted on archaeological sites, sites with rare or protected species, grassland that has never been ploughed, wetlands or heathland.
- Think about the final size of the tree and be aware of the surroundings – tree roots can grow outwards to twice the height of the tree. (Growing trees can interfere with electricity cables, underground pipes, and building structures.)
- Avoid planting trees under existing trees as it will restrict water, light and growth.

To help plan where to plant your tree, included below is an indication of how big trees can grow:

- Oak – can grow to 40 metres**
- Rowan – can grow to 15 metres**
- Hawthorn – can grow to 15 metres**
- Holly – can grow to 15 metres**
- Hazel – can grow to 12 metres**
- Wild Cherry – can grow to 30 metres**
- Dogwood – can grow to 8 metres**
- Silver birch – can grow to 30 metres**
- Hornbeam – can grow to 30 metres**
- Crab Apple – can grow to 10 metres**
- Scots Pine – can grow to 30 metres**
- Blackthorn – can grow to 7 metres**
- Guelder Rose – can grow to 5 metres**
- Beech – can grow to 40 metres**

Choosing which species

When choosing a species of tree, think about the purpose it will have:

For aesthetic purposes: trees are attractive, and people like to see them in gardens and landscapes.

To attract wildlife: native trees with nuts and berries such as rowan, hazel and beech provide food for wildlife throughout the year.

To provide shelter for livestock: native species such as oak, birch, rowan, hazel and hawthorn provide a good source of shade in summer and shelter from the elements over winter, and also have natural medicinal values.

For timber production: we recommend species such as oak and beech.

For a source of wood fuel: cherry, hornbeam, birch and rowan all burn well.

Preparing the area:

Mark out where each tree will be planted, cut the grass short and weed to help reduce competition for water.

Trees should be planted at least 2 metres apart

Some equipment you will require:

A spade or fork, a tree guard to protect the tree, a stake to support the tree, a hammer, a tie to keep the stake and guard together, mulch or mulch mat, watering can.

Before planting, submerge the roots in a bucket of water for between 30mins - 1 hour, to prevent the root hairs from dying.

How to plant

The best method of planting for the trees from the Gift to Nature tree nursery is as follows:



→ Dig a hole three times as wide as the pot and the same depth. Keep the topsoil in a separate pile for later. *(While some plants may benefit from compost or manure being added, amending the soil is a bad idea. Trees with amended soil don't root out as much because the soil near the base is nice. The initial rooting out of the tree is critical and the tree needs to get used to the surrounding soil.)*

→ Break up the compacted soil around the hole to improve drainage and aeration.



→ Loosen the root ball to encourage the roots to grow into the soil.

→ Place the tree in, making sure that where the roots meet the trunk is level with the surface of the soil, not above or below. This is crucial.

→ Refill the hole with the topsoil, gently shaking the tree to make sure that the soil is in contact with the roots.



→ Make sure the tree is upright, and then firm up the soil by using the heel of your boot, to remove any air pockets that could allow frost in. Once you've firmed it, give the tree a little tug and hopefully it should stay put.

→ Once the tree is secured and in position, water the tree thoroughly to settle the soil around the roots.

Support

→ Once the tree is in place, add the cane next to the tree, but be aware not to position it too close, or you may damage the roots of the tree.

→ Finally, take your tree guard and carefully place it over the tree, gently pushing it about 1cm into the ground to prevent any vermin nibbling the tree. Then use the ties to secure the guard to the stake. Ensure the top of the stake is below the top of the guard. (For top heavy trees, put the stake in at a 45-degree angle, using a hammer to make sure it is secure.)

~Tree shelters protect the plant from rabbits and voles, as well as herbicides. They also provide a protected microclimate for trees, resulting in better initial establishment and higher survival rates. They also retain moisture, therefore reducing water stress and helping the plant survive in dry conditions. The shelters we supply have a flared rim to prevent chaffing of the tree as it moves in the wind and will over time start to degrade and breakdown into water and CO₂ by a process of microbiology. Mulching or burying at its end of life will significantly increase the rate of this process.



Aftercare

~ Weeding

The most important step to support the trees start. Keep a 1m diameter around the tree clear of weeds and grass for the first 2 years to minimise competition for water and nutrients.

Bark chippings or straw bales (mulch/mulch mat) can be used to suppress weed growth, and also releases nutrients into the soil as the bark breaks down. To prevent it being blown away, apply it around the tree at a depth of 10cm. Alternatively, you can get mulch mats which can be pegged into the ground.

~ Watering

To encourage root growth towards the groundwater, the tree should not be watered. Although if there is a long dry period, saturate the ground to ensure water soaks deep into the soil.

~ Mowing

Regular grass cutting is not recommended as it increases grass growth and competition for moisture. If you have to mow, be careful not to damage the tree/guards.

~ Tree guards

Check your tree guards and make sure they are upright, and pushed firmly in the ground, as strong winds can blow trees over. Pull out any grass growing within the guard, and then replace the guard around the tree. The guard will need to be removed once it starts to disintegrate/split, which can happen after around 5 years.

~ Pruning

Not essential but can help to encourage growth upwards rather than outwards, to help create a diverse canopy. For best results, a pruning saw can be used to make a clean cut close to the tree trunk.

We hope you find this guide helpful, and enjoy planting your tree and watching it grow, getting as much pleasure from your tree as we do.

For further information, visit:

The Woodland Trust – www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/advice/

Royal Horticultural Society – www.rhs.org.uk/plants/types/trees/growing-guide

The Tree Council – www.treecouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/planting-and-care/planting-guidance/

Copse in a Box – www.moortrees.org

Tree Growers Guide – www.treegrowersguide.org.uk

Gift to Nature works to support, protect and improve the natural environment on the Isle of Wight, looking after some of the Island's most precious countryside reserves and local green spaces. We are passionate about keeping this environment beautiful and open for all.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to keep up to date with the Gift to Nature story.

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