



Tree planting guide

Planting new trees – of the right kind and in the right places – is something anyone can do to improve their environment.

This guide sets out the main points that you will need to consider, whether they are carrying out the planting themselves or taking the lead in community tree planting. It gives tips on choosing a planting site and selecting the appropriate species and size of stock, planting techniques and methods of tree protection.

Section one: planning tree planting

Selecting the correct planting sites and the right trees is critical – mistakes can be long lasting and difficult to rectify. An important factor to take into account is what the area may look like in 20, 50 and 100 years. A single well-placed tree can grow to be seen above the rooftops and may give more visual benefit than several scattered small ones. The ideal is a tree able to grow to full maturity with little or no surgery. Mature trees do not necessarily take up large amounts of space.



Choosing a planting site

Options include:

- front and back gardens
- existing tree pits
- roundabouts
- grass verges
- traffic islands
- housing estates (but beware of underground services)
- parks and open spaces
- alongside public footpaths
- school/college grounds
- city farms
- local nature reserves (without disturbing the ecological balance)
- woodland (without disturbing the ecological balance)
- golf courses
- hospital grounds
- industrial estates
- shops and office car parks
- playing fields
- development sites.

It is not uncommon for a self-set tree seedling or whip to outgrow a larger tree (even one that is well-maintained) and reach maturity before it.

However, if the aim is to have instant effect, it is a good idea to choose a standard or semi-mature tree.

Seedlings, transplants and whips

- Very cheap – so a good way to achieve large-scale planting.
- Easy to plant – so ideal for community/school planting involving volunteers.
- Readily stands the stress of transplanting.

Feather

- Relatively cheap – so still practical for large projects.
- More likely to be damaged or stressed during planting than smaller stock.
- Requires more skill in planting because it needs to be well-anchored in the soil to reduce the risk of wind damage.

Standard

- Relatively expensive to buy and also requires more planting preparation.
- Less susceptible to damage during planting than smaller stock.
- A good way to achieve immediate impact in gardens, streets or shopping precincts.

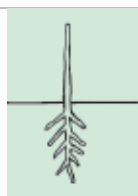
Heavy standard

- An expensive option.
- Good for achieving effect in prestigious sites.

Semi-mature

- The most expensive option.
- Achieves instant impact but needs very careful planting and a great deal of maintenance (particularly watering) for a long time after planting.

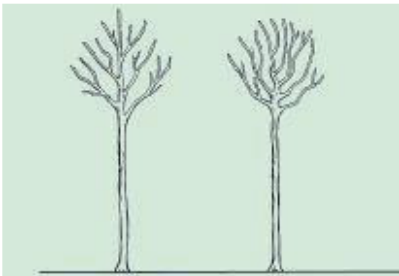
Normal trade descriptions of trees of various sizes – used throughout the nursery trade



Seedling height: 0.2 to 0.9m (8in to 3ft)



Whip height: 1m to 1.75m (3ft 3in to 5ft 9in)

 Transplant height: up to 1.25m (4ft)	 Feather height: 1.25 to 2.5m (4ft to 8ft)
 (From left) Standard with leader height: 2 to 3.5m (6ft 6in to 11ft 6in) Standard with branching head height: 2 to 3.5m (6ft 6in to 11ft 6in)	 Multi-stemmed height: various Also available are: Heavy standard same as standard but height 3.5m (11ft 6in) or more, girth 140mm (5in) Semi-mature size varies

Types of stock

- As well as being available in different sizes, trees are produced in different types of
- stock.
- Bare-root – grown in open ground, dug up in winter and sold with no soil covering the roots; usually small stock, i.e. whips and feathers.
- Root-balled – like bare root but sold with a covering of soil and wrapped in hessian
- for transportation; usually larger stock, i.e. standards and upwards.
- Containerised – like rootballed but put into a container for sale.
- Container-grown – most common type of stock in garden centres; all sizes are now available.
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Obtaining trees

One way to obtain new trees is to grow them from seeds or by taking cuttings or grafts (see section 3, How to grow your own trees). If this is not an option, here are points to consider when buying them.

Ordering trees

- If ordering native species, check their origin and be wary if the nursery is unable to supply the information. Some nurseries list the origin of each species in
- their catalogues. Some nurseries will raise plants from seed of acceptable origin if collected and supplied by the customer.
- Place orders early with a reputable nursery to ensure a prompt delivery; if possible stipulate a date.

Local suppliers, listed in the Yellow Pages under 'Nurseries – Horticultural' or 'Garden Centres', will mostly specialise in containergrown ornamental stock. However, many will supply other types of tree to order. For sources of native trees in quantity, a good starting point is the local wildlife trust or BTCV office, or even the local authority officer.

For large numbers of trees it is best to place orders by July or August for supply in the late autumn/winter. Beware of accepting substitute tree species which seldom have the desired characteristics of the plants ordered. Inspect the trees as soon as they arrive and return them immediately to the nursery if they are unfit for planting: e.g. have broken leading shoots or side branches, damaged bark or dried-out and damaged roots. For container-grown trees, check they are not pot-bound.

Section two: planting the trees

To give new trees the best possible start and the greatest chances of survival, there are a number of key considerations.

When to plant

Bare-root trees should be planted during the dormant season. Container-grown trees can be planted all year round. In all cases, avoid days when the ground is frozen.

A good time to plant is during The Tree Council's National Tree Week (end of November – beginning of December). In dry areas, late autumn planting is best for most species as this gives trees a chance to become established before spring droughts. In wet areas, early spring planting is best.

Ideally, the site should be drained of excess water. Where soils are wet and then freeze there is a risk of 'frost lift' which can devastate newly planted trees, though this is unlikely in most years. Evergreen trees are best planted either early or late in the planting season. Spring planting should not take place until the soil has begun to warm. Although container-grown trees can be planted at any time of year, the same guidelines will give best results for them too.

If planting is in late spring or summer, container-grown trees should be watered during dry spells for the first growing season (see section 5, Managing and caring for trees).

Pre-planting care

Many bare-root trees are already dead when planted. This is often because of careless handling between the time they are lifted from the nursery and final planting-out.

Unfortunately, these trees are not easy to identify before planting and the first sign of a problem may be when they fail to grow.