

Planting and Establishing Trees

1. Location: First, look up for wires or lights and make sure you selected the right tree for the right place. Start with a high quality tree, Florida grade 1 or Florida Fancy. Never plant a tree in the public right of way or in a drainage/utility easement. For questions regarding easement locations contact Public Works at 727-724-1550.

2. Roots: Remove the tree from the container and check for girdling or circling roots. Cut and remove and girdling or circling roots. If the roots are matted, break them up and spread them out while planting.

3. Dig Hole: Find the upper most root growing from the trunk; You may need to remove some dirt. Measure the root ball from top to bottom and dig a shallow hole as to allow the upper most root to be 2 inches above existing grade. The hole should be 1 ½ times the width of the root ball.

4. Setting the Tree: Place the root ball into the hole and start backfilling with the original, unamended soil. Gently pack soil around the root ball making sure not to over compact; The roots will grow faster in looser soil. Do not add any fertilizer and do not cover up the top of the root ball with soil. Soil on top of the root ball will impede water and oxygen from getting to the roots.

5. Filling: Straighten the tree when backfilling. Water to the point the surrounding soil is a soup like consistency. Make sure there are no air pockets left in the surrounding soil and the root ball is fully saturated with water.

6. Mulch: Build a small dirt ring approx. 4" from the outside of the root ball to hold water in place when watering. Apply a 3" layer of mulch on the outside of the dirt ring. Make sure not to cover the root ball with a thick layer of mulch or dirt.

7. Watering: Water the tree daily for the first two weeks, then water the tree every other day for two additional months. After the first two months, water the tree twice a week until the tree is fully established. Measure the trunk of the tree 6" above grade and use 2 gallons of water per inch while watering. A typical 2" tree will be fully established within 6 months but will still require watering during

dry periods for the first two years. Never irrigate soil that is already saturated. If you have an irrigation system you can install a drip line inside the tree ring. This can be disconnected once the tree is fully established.

8. Staking: The tree may need to be staked. A great reference for additional information on tree establishment can be found by Google searching “Ed Gilman Landscaping Plants.” This will bring you to the University of Florida website which contains wonderful tree and plant information; Or you can call James Ryan at 727-724-1555 ext. 1303 or email at JaRyan@CityofSafetHarbor.com