Basic instructions and diagrams for handling, care, and planting of seedlings

The instructions are shown using a 'planting bar'. Planting bars are available from the Vernon County Land & Water Conservation Department for a returnable deposit of $30.00, (608)637-5480. A shovel or planting hoe may be substituted.

1. Insert bar at 45 degree angle. Push forward to upright position.

2. Remove bar and place seedling at correct depth.

3. Hold seedling at correct depth, insert bar 3 inches from seedling.

4. Pull bar handle toward planter to close hole at bottom of roots.

5. Push bar handle forward to close hole at top of roots.

6. Stomp with heel to fill in the last hole.
HANDLING THE TREES

Seedlings are living and must be handled carefully. For the highest survival rate, treat trees carefully and plant them immediately. If planting must be delayed a few days, keep the plants in a cold, protected place. Keep the trees out of the rain and wind. To check if the trees need water, feel the roots, if it isn't damp, water the trees and allow the excess water to drain. In cool, damp weather, the biggest threat to these trees is from mold.

HOW TO PLANT

Ideal planting days are cool and cloudy with little or no wind. If possible, avoid planting on warm, windy days. The soil should be moist. Care in planting is more important than speed. Make sure the roots are never allowed to become dry. Bare root seedlings should be carried in a waterproof bag or bucket to keep them damp. Ideally, bare root boxes should be kept refrigerated or packed in ice or snow.

- Competition from weeds, grass, brush or other trees is very detrimental to survival and growth of seedlings. Choose areas free from this competition or clear at least a three-foot square bare spot before planting. Seedlings should not be planted under the crown of existing trees, or closer than 6 feet to existing brush.

- Brush aside loose organic material such as leaves, grass, etc., from the planting spot to expose mineral soil. If organic matter gets into the planting hole, it can decompose and leave air spaces. Roots will dry out when they grow into these spaces.

- Open up the hole, making sure the hole is deep enough for the roots to be fully extended. If roots are curled or bunched up, the tree will not be able to take up water correctly, will often weaken and die, or may blow down later due to poor root structure.

- Take a tree out of planting bag or bucket only after a hole is ready. When exposed, the fine roots can dry out in as little as 30 seconds. Remember to remove the container before planting a containerized tree.

- Hold the seedling in place in the hole, making sure the roots are straight, fully extended and that the tree is neither too shallow nor too deep in the hole.

- Fill hole, allowing soil to fall in around the roots. Tamp with hands or with your heel. Fill with more soil, if necessary, and tamp. Tamping is important. If soil is not firmly packed around the roots, there will be air pockets that can dry out the roots, and the seedlings may be weakly anchored. (Addition of fertilizer and plant vitamins at the time of planting is not generally necessary.)

Avoid these tree planting errors: tangled roots, planting too shallow, planting too deep, air pockets, turned up roots, planting over rocks.

CARE OF TREES FOLLOWING PLANTING

Check periodically to be sure that brush and grass are kept under control by mowing or spraying. Always obtain advice from a licensed pest control advisor before using chemicals. Monitoring the appearance of your trees will help you to detect signs of insects, diseases or other problems. Look for foliage turning yellow, new foliage drooping or other signs of poor health. It is easier to take successful corrective action if the problem is detected early.

Over watering and too much mulch are common problems with ornamental plantings. You probably won't need to water more frequently than every 7-10 days during periods of no rain. Give your trees a thorough, deep soak and then let the soil dry out before the next watering. This encourages the roots to grow down in search of water. Frequent, shallow watering encourages root growth near the surface and the trees are more dependent on irrigation and are less windfirm. More than 1-3 inches of mulch can suffocate the roots and retain so much moisture that diseases. Animals can also cause major damage to young trees. Deer, porcupines, rabbits, and cattle are the most frequent source of damage.