

Ground Preparation for SPRING TREE PLANTING

When you get your bare-root tree seedlings and plugs, you're anxious to get them in the ground and growing. But to ensure good survival of these plants, it's a good idea to prepare the site prior to planting.

Your seedlings will benefit from a "weed free" environment for a minimum of 3 years. This reduces competition for nutrients, sun, and water and lets the plants get a chance to establish and reduce 'root shock'. One of the best ways to prep the site is to remove the sod or grass cover prior to planting. This can be done by plowing a furrow or scalping a piece of sod approximately 1 ft. by 1 ft. Removing the sod has several advantages besides just reducing competition: For one thing, it leaves you a ready-made trench for watering: just pour on a bucket of water and let it soak in for deep watering and healthy roots! For another, you can also 'recycle' the sod by using it to patch a bare spot in your lawn.

Once you've planted the trees in this bare area you may want place mulch around the seedling to reduce water loss. Don't forget to weed regularly—grasses and weeds can spring back up before you know it and overtop your young tree!

You can also spray herbicide around the seedling, if you are VERY careful to protect the seedling from the spray. This can be done by using a piece of stovepipe to shield the seedling and then spraying about a 2 ft. circle around the plant. The use of "Round-Up" around Memorial Day weekend or early June is a good time for this as there usually adequate growth of weeds and/or grasses for the herbicide to work. If you choose this option, PLEASE read and follow ALL directions on the label carefully to avoid damage to the environment!

With proper site preparation, good weed control for the first 3 years of growth, and regular watering for the first year, your trees will have the best start you can give them.