

MAYOR OF LONDON

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# STEP BY STEP PLANTING GUIDE

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# TREE PLANTING GUIDE

Thank you for doing your bit to help make London a little bit greener - we really appreciate it. We would love you to plant your trees as part of London's biggest ever tree planting weekend between 1 and 2 December. Find out more about the weekend at: [www.london.gov.uk/trees](http://www.london.gov.uk/trees)

This planting guide will help you to make sure that your trees get off to the best possible start.

## 1 Unpack and check your trees

1. Check that the species, number, and height of the trees are correct.
2. Check that the roots are damp and in good order. The root structure of species can vary between fibrous and tap rooted, i.e. not so fibrous.
3. Check that the tree stems are in a healthy and fresh condition and not dried out or brittle. Remember that the trees are currently in a dormant state so don't expect leaves in full flush.
4. For reassurance, scrape back the stem of the tree (using your fingernail) to reveal green underneath the bark. This represents a healthy tree.
5. Check the tree as a whole to make sure no roots or stems have been broken or damaged during transit.

## 2 Look after your trees before planting them

1. All trees should be planted within one week of delivery. The trees can be 'heeled in' immediately or alternatively will remain healthy in their bags for up to 7 days.
2. Make sure the bags containing the trees are stored in a cool building overnight and are kept out of the elements.
3. Any overnight frost contact with the bags can be damaging to the trees.
4. If you are unable to plant them within this time period, we recommend that you 'heel' your trees into the ground for safe storage and to keep them healthy.
5. 'Heeled in' trees will store happily throughout the winter period until you are ready to plant them.

## 3 If you need to, temporarily heel your trees in

1. Start by digging a V-shaped trench, wide enough and deep enough to hold the roots of the trees you are to heel in. Remove the trees from any packaging and place them at an angle in the trench in their bundles, so that the roots are at the bottom and the trunk or base of the tree rests up the side of the trench.
2. Backfill the trench with soil to cover the roots. You can then use your heel to firm the trees in and remove any air pockets.
3. Water the trees once in position. They will stay there quite happily throughout the winter period. Do not remove or try to plant during frost or snow conditions. Be wary of leaving trees beyond the planting season as you do not wish them to break dormancy prior to planting them in their permanent position. The 'rule of thumb' deadline is generally around mid-April, dependent upon the timing of spring.

## 4 Remove your heeled in trees

1. When you are ready to relocate the trees to their permanent position, gently remove and loosen the soil from the trench. We recommend using a trowel or your fingers, instead of a spade or shovel, to prevent accidentally damaging the roots. When you feel the bundles becoming loose then pull from the ground and gently shake off any excess soil from the roots.

2. If the roots have remained damp, then place your trees within a planting bag in readiness for planting. Alternatively, it wouldn't harm to give them a 'drink' prior to planting. Fill a bucket with water and place the plant roots within. Allow them to soak for 5–10 minutes. Drain off and place within the planting bag.

## 5 Plant your trees - do not plant if the ground is frozen or waterlogged

Planting your trees is an easy task, as bare-rooted trees can be notch-planted. Here's how:

1. If not already decided upon, find a suitable position for your trees, bearing in mind how tall and wide they grow to in maturity.
2. Begin by inserting the blade of a spade into the ground, push the spade handle away from you and then bring it back towards you. Once you remove the spade, you will see that you have created a cavity in the ground.
3. Place the tree roots within the cavity and shake to ensure that all of the roots are pointing downwards.
4. Use your heel to firm the soil around the tree to remove any air pockets. Once planted, give them a good watering to aid recovery.



## 6 Fit protection for your trees if required

1. Tree protection is optional, and will only be supplied if requested when ordering your trees. Protection should be securely fitted following planting if required to protect trees from animals such as dogs and rabbits.
2. Firstly, secure the cane or stake next to the planted tree, then follow up and fit the spiral guard as the final task.
3. Spirals should be placed over both the tree and the cane – the only purpose of the cane is to hold the spiral up.

## 7 Maintain your trees

1. To increase prospects for survival and subsequent growth rate, the implementation of a maintenance programme is essential. Lack of weeding is the biggest single killer of young planted trees.
2. It is far cheaper to weed than to replace dead trees.

3. Weeded trees establish faster and need less maintenance overall.
4. However, when planting bare-root stock, it is not unusual for natural losses to occur so always expect a small percentage of failures to be replaced in the first two years following planting.
5. You must eradicate weed competition at the base of trees for the first three growing seasons. This can be done by chemical means or by hand weeding.
6. If you have protection on the trees, you can safely spray the base to kill off weeds and grasses with appropriate herbicides, without risk of chemicals touching the trees. Check at least twice a year that all protective sundries are securely fitted and replace where necessary. Protection should be maintained for at least 5 years.

**For more help on planting trees, including 'how to' videos, visit**

[tcv.org.uk/plantingtrees](http://tcv.org.uk/plantingtrees)

Find out more at [www.tcv.org.uk](http://www.tcv.org.uk)

Have a question about tree packs or planting?

e-mail [sarah.clarke@tcv.org.uk](mailto:sarah.clarke@tcv.org.uk) or visit [www.tcv.org.uk](http://www.tcv.org.uk)

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