PLANTING TIPS

1. Dig a hole twice as wide as the root mass and slightly shallower than the root mass. This technique puts the aerated backfill soil where the new roots will grow and leaves a base of naturally firm soil for the roots to rest on, which won't settle when watered.

2. Avoid the *clay-pot syndrome*. Roughen the sides and bottom of your planting hole with a pick or shovel so that root tips can penetrate the native soil. Smooth walls are like cement to root tips.

3. Plant seedling to about the same depth as in nursery beds.

Correct--Seedlings with root colar at ground level; roots spread.

Incorrect--Cramped roots may develop into poor root system.

Incorrect--Root collar too high may dry out; survival chance poor.

4. Give your soil a boost. Though the latest trend in tree planting is not to add amendment, if adding soil amendment, always mix it with soil from the planting site; about one part amendment to three parts native soil is a good proportion for backfill soil. Some professionals also recommend putting slow release fertilizer tablets in the hole at this time.

5. Tamp the soil as you backfill. This will help stabilize the tree in the hole. Yes, you can tamp too much; excessive pressure (especially in clay soils) will reduce the soil porosity, which is essential for healthy root growth. As usual with trees (and most living things), practice moderation.

6. Get it wet! Build a temporary watering basin around the root ball to encourage water penetration. A tree that has a dry root ball can stand in a moist backfill without absorbing water! Water thoroughly after planting.

7. Keeping all of this valuable instruction in mind, the best way to learn about tree planting is to get out there and do it. There are plenty of books to read, but there's no substitute for the real thing. We hope all this how-to information has got you itching to dig a hole; it may not be the perfect planting hole the first time, but you'll get a feel for it after a couple of tries. Trees are forgiving: they'll probably survive in spite of your attempts to do everything perfectly!