



City of Plantation  
Public Works – Environmental Landscape Division

**Tree Planting Guidelines for Homeowners**

Now that you have invested in a tree or palm that will be part of your home for many years to come, please follow the following guidelines to ensure its establishment, health and longevity.

**Choose the right tree and the appropriate planting location**

- **Your tree must have a nursery grade of Florida #1 or better.**

*This means that the tree has a straight, single trunk (leader), evenly distributed lateral branches, free of injuries, pests and diseases, and a well-formed root system (left photo). Trees with co-dominant branches are weaker and unacceptable (right photo).*



**Please do not purchase trees with girdling or circling roots (right), or have injuries to the trunk (left). These are unacceptable trees.**

Root greater than 1/10<sup>th</sup> the diameter of the trunk circling around more than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the trunk in the top half of the root ball will result in poor tree growth and establishment.



**Trees with included bark (right), where two adjacent branches fuse with one another, are not accepted.**

Look for a dominant central leader and single, smaller lateral branches with good attachment (left).

- **Choose the right species of tree for the planting location.**

Select a tree species from the list of City-recommended Category 1 and/or Category 2 tree species provided, depending on the tree replacement requirement; alternative species require approval from the Division. Because trees vary in their light, water, and soil requirements, it is important to plant them in proper locations on the property, where there is plenty of growing space (left photo). A shade intolerant tree will not grow well if planted under the canopy of a larger tree. Large-maturing trees typically have large expansive root systems and should not be planted close to buildings (middle photo) or driveways and walkways (right photo).



- **Consider purchasing field grown trees rather than trees grown in containers.**

Studies have shown that field grown trees establish faster, use water more efficiently, are more wind resistant, and have higher survival rates than container grown trees. When container-grown trees are maintained crowded together in the nursery, their canopies may not develop properly due to shading and crowding. Trunks may also develop poor taper, and roots can encircle and girdle the trunk within the container.

**Plant the tree properly for good growth and establishment**

- **Tree hole size is important.**

Dig a hole that is not more than twice the width of the root ball diameter and slightly less than its depth. It is better to plant a tree slightly higher in the ground than too deeply. The top of the first major root should be visible and 1 to 2" above ground level after planting (left photo); planting a tree too deep buries the roots (right photo) and can cause long-term tree health problems.



- **Remove the container before planting.**

Container grown trees must be removed from the container. Field grown trees balled and wrapped in burlap can be planted with natural burlap on as long as the burlap is cut away from the trunk.

- **Plant the tree so that it stands erect in the hole.**

*Leaning trees will not grow properly and are at risk of falling as they increase in size. Fill the hole with the same soil you took out when digging it. Water the hole as you fill it to remove air pockets in the soil. After planting, the first major root of the tree should be visible at ground level or higher.*

- **Mulch around the base of the tree.**

*Make a ring of soil around the tree at least 2 feet from the trunk to hold water while the tree is establishing (left photo). Apply mulch (no colored or Cypress mulch!) at least 2 inches deep around the tree but keep it at least 6 inches from the trunk. The ring of mulch helps to retain moisture, reduce weeds, supply nutrients, and protect the trunk from mechanical injury. Mulch volcanoes (right photo) are unacceptable as they retain moisture around the tree trunk and bury tree roots.*



- **Temporarily stake the tree if necessary.**

*If the new tree cannot stand upright in its hole, staking will be needed but should be removed as soon as it is no longer required (generally around six months for trees, longer for palms). Please follow the City-approved Tree Planting Detail sheet (attached) for information about staking materials and installation.*



**Do not stake trees using synthetic straps, burlap, wire, or plastic material, or metal or bamboo poles (middle and right).**

Only biodegradable rope may be wrapped around a tree trunk (left).

### Maintain the tree for health and longevity

- **Water for tree establishment.**

*Water is critical for the first few months of a newly planted tree. New trees should be watered generously, even during the rainy season. For a 2-4" caliper tree, water daily for the first month, every other day for the next three months, then weekly until established. Trees greater than 4" caliper should be watered daily for the first six weeks.*

- **Fertilize periodically for increased growth and vigor.**

*Fertilize new (and existing trees!) three to four times per year. Because soils in the City of Plantation lack certain elements necessary for plant growth, we recommend the application of an 8-2-12 all-purpose fertilizer, or a 13-3-13 palm special/ornamental tree fertilizer or similar. For each fertilizer, follow the manufacturer's recommended rates and methods of application.*

- **Mulch for long-term benefits.**

*Maintaining a layer of mulch around the tree is a year-round necessity. Mulching helps to retain soil moisture, deters weeds, protects the trunk from mechanical damage, and serves as a slow-release natural fertilizer as it decomposes in place. Recycled (available from the City's Public Works Recycling Center), eucalyptus, and melaleuca mulches are recommended. The City prohibits the use of cypress, colored (red, green, gold, brown), and synthetic mulches.*

- **Prune trees for good structure.**

*Trimming (pruning) should begin when the tree is young so that it develops strong attachments between the main trunk and its lateral branches, and reduces the likelihood of failure caused by defects in tree structure. Tree trimming permits are required and can be obtained through the Landscape Division. Contact the Division for more information about the permit requirements. The City recommends periodic pruning by an ISA Certified Arborist. You can locate an ISA Certified Arborist using the following link: <http://www.Treesaregood.com/findanarborist/arboristsearch.aspx>.*

**Call before you dig to protect buried utilities – it's the law!**

- Call 811 or use one of the online services at [www.sunshine811.com](http://www.sunshine811.com) two full business days (but not more than five) before digging a tree hole to avoid hitting buried utilities, such as electric, gas, telephone, cable, and water lines.
- Wait the required time for your property to be located and marked with color-coded paint, flags, or stakes (see color codes below). For your convenience, use the free positive response system to find out if your property has been located.

APWA UNIFORM COLOR CODE	
White	<b>WHITE</b> - Proposed Excavation
Pink	<b>PINK</b> - Temporary Survey Markings
Red	<b>RED</b> - Electric Power Lines, Cables, Conduit and Lighting Cables
Yellow	<b>YELLOW</b> - Gas, Oil, Steam, Petroleum or Gaseous Materials
Orange	<b>ORANGE</b> - Communication, Alarm or Signal Lines, Cables or Conduit
Blue	<b>BLUE</b> - Potable Water
Purple	<b>PURPLE</b> - Reclaimed Water, Irrigation and Slurry Lines
Green	<b>GREEN</b> - Sewers and Drain Lines

- Respect the markings on the property. Protect the marks during your tree planting work. If marks are destroyed, request a new locate ticket.
- Dig safely! Use extreme caution when digging within 24 inches on either side of the marks to avoid hitting the buried utility lines.

**Contact the Landscape Division at 954-414-7395 if you have any questions or concerns, or desire additional information regarding any of these tree planting and maintenance guidelines.**