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Extension Forestry

4-H FORESTRY FACT SHEET

How To Plant a Tree

When the trees arrive from the nursery and you are not ready to plant, store them in a cooler or refrigerator where the temperature is 33° to 38° F. If you are ready to plant and will do so over several days, then open the bundle or box and wet down the root systems. Let excess water drain off. When planting the seedlings, be sure the roots do not dry out.

Ground preparation

The amount of ground preparation needed prior to planting depends on where you are going to plant. If the planting area is a logged slope with few stumps and weeds, all that is necessary is to clean off or scalp an area about 20 inches square. Seedlings are unable to compete with grass and weeds. If the planting area is a part of a field, it will be necessary to turn the soil by tilling or plowing. If plowing, smooth out the surface with a disk and harrow. If there are a lot of grasses and weeds in the field, it is advisable to work the soil a year ahead of planting.

Spacing

If you are planting one acre (208.17 feet square) and you wish to let the trees grow into timber without thinning, use a spacing of 12 feet by 12 feet and plant 300 seedlings.

Another option is to plant the seedlings closer and thin out every other one for Christmas trees or wait several years and cut alternate trees for small firewood logs. This spacing uses 5 1/2 feet by 5 1/2 feet and plants 1,440 seedlings.



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Planting procedure

Any bucket, bag or planting tray can be used for carrying the trees during the planting operation. In the container used, the material around the roots should be wet to prevent damage through exposure. Never carry a handful of trees exposed to the sun and wind. Take one tree at a time from the carrying container and plant it immediately.

Trees should be planted as deep as they grew in the nursery. A color change on the stem above the root system marks the former soil line.

Be sure the planting hole or slit is large enough in width and depth so the root system will not be crowded or doubled up. In slit planting, push the tree down to the bottom of the slit, and with a shaking motion, raise it back to the correct level. This helps to arrange the roots in as natural position as possible.

While holding the tree in an upright position at the correct depth, bring loose, moist soil in around the root system. Do not let dry soil or surface litter fall in around the roots for it will damage or kill the tree. When the slit or hole is filled with moist soil, press it down firmly. Place a layer of loose soil or fine material around the tree to act as a mulch to conserve soil moisture.

Care after planting

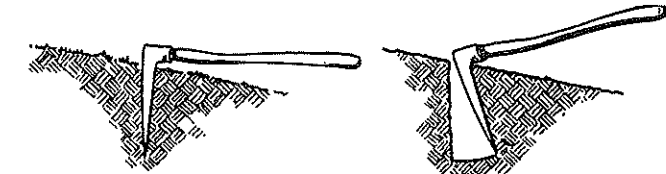
The first two years after planting are critical for young trees. Survival and soil moisture go "hand in hand." Any practice or procedure that will maintain good soil moisture should be followed.

1. For field planted trees keep your planting free of weeds and grasses by SHALLOW cultivation when weeds are small and by the use of pre-emergent herbicides. Tree plantings should be clean cultivated as long as equipment can go through the trees.

2. If possible, irrigate plantings to keep the soil moist and the plants in active growth.
3. Use herbicides to reduce weed growth in the tree row. Some herbicides can be applied at low rates per acre over the tops of newly planted seedlings with very good results. Follow label instructions carefully.
4. Keep livestock and poultry out of tree plantings. Examine your trees often for damage by disease, insects or rodents. Clean cultivation greatly reduces the rodent risk.
5. Replace all missing trees the spring after planting. Usually very few plants are lost after the second year.

ERRORS IN PLANTING

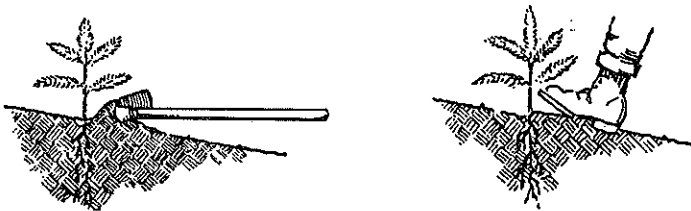
PLANTING WITH A HOE



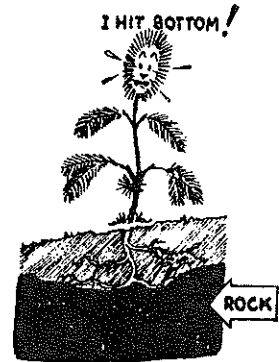
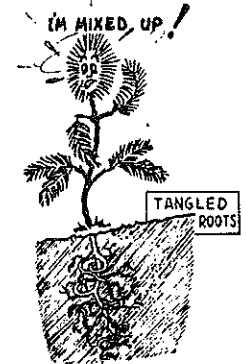
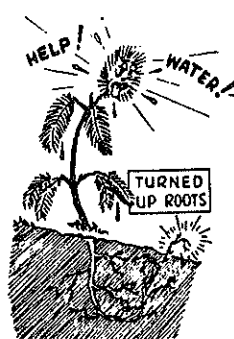
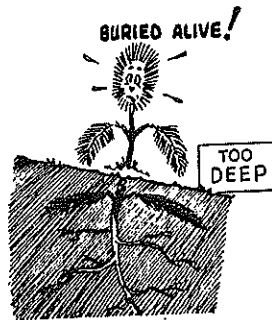
1. Swing hoe to get full penetration.
2. Lift handle and pull to widen hole.



3. Place seedling while using hoe to hold back soil.
4. Use hoe to pack soil at bottom of hole.



5. Use hoe to pack soil at top of hole.
6. Firm soil around seedling with feet.



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