

Planting Tips for Native Bare-Root Trees and Shrubs

Once you get home with bare-root trees and shrubs, what should you do?

Timing

Bare-root plants should be planted as soon as possible after purchase, ideally within a day or two. Proper planting is critical to their survival and long-term success. If you need to wait a few days to plant the bare roots, make sure the plants are moist and place them in a cool, shady place where the plants will not freeze.

Location

To plant your bare-root trees and shrubs it's most important to choose the right spot for each genus. The plants in our sale have varying soil, sun exposure, and moisture requirements. Check Benton Soil and Water Conservation District's online Native Plant Sale Catalog (bentonswcd.org/shop/) or Native Plant Database (bentonswcd.org/plant_cat/native/) for details on the specific plant's preferences before planting.

Site Preparation and Placement

Once you have established the best location to plant, dig a hole that is twice the diameter of the root spread. The hole should be deep enough to accommodate the roots without crowding or bending. One of the main causes of plant collapse is planting too deep. The plant crown should be about an inch below soil level. Partially fill the hole, firming the soil around the lower roots. Add in the remaining soil. It should be firmly but not tightly packed.

It is not recommended to amend the soil with compost or fertilizers. Native plants are suited to our soils so the best preparation you can do for your plants is to plant in the right location, as mentioned above.

Construct a water-holding basin around the plant and give the plant plenty of water. (In general it is better to water for longer less often than watering for a shorter time more frequently. Watering longer encourages the roots to spread downwards.) After the water has soaked in, spread protective mulch two inches deep in a 3-foot diameter area around the base of the tree, but not touching the trunk.

If you have problems with browsers (deer, mice), using plant protection (such as mesh tree protectors or caging) while the plant is still young may be beneficial.

Supplemental watering during the first few summers will be beneficial for bare-root plants.

References

Tree Care Instructions bentonswcd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Time-to-pot-upand-tree-care-instructions.pdf

Gardener's Supply Company: www.gardeners.com/how-to/planting-bare-root/8764.html

National Arbor Day Foundation: www.arborday.org/Trees/planting/bare-root.cfm

Thank you for supporting Benton Soil and Water Conservation District's Native Plant Sale!



Planting Tips for Native Bulbs and Seeds

Once you get home with a bagful of hard-to-find native bulbs, what should you do?

Timing

The best time to plant bulbs and seeds is in the fall after the first rains when soils are cool and not so hard. This generally occurs in late October in our area. If you need to wait a few days to plant the bulbs, you don't want the bulbs to dry out. Make sure the bulbs are moist and put them in a plastic bag with ventilation holes so they stay moist yet don't sweat and mold. Keep the bag in your refrigerator or a cool, dry place until you are able to plant. Tiger lily and fawn lily are especially susceptible to molding so it is important for them to be kept in a refrigerator until planting time. Keep in mind that if kept in the refrigerator, store away from other fruits as the ethylene off-gassing can damage the undeveloped flower within the bulb.

Location

To plant your native bulbs it's most important to choose the right spot for each genus. The bulbs in our sale have varying soil, sun exposure, and moisture requirements. Check Benton Soil and Water Conservation District's online Native Plant Sale Catalog (bentonswcd.org/shop/) or Native Plant Database (bentonswcd.org/plant_cat/native/) for details on the specific plant's preferences before planting. For example, most bulbs like well-drained soils but great and common camas need winter and spring moisture.

Site Preparation

Once you have established the best location to plant, loosen the soil to a depth of 5 – 8 inches. Smaller native bulbs are not treated the same as the much larger daffodil and tulip bulbs typically sold this time of year. A shallow planting hole is best for natives. Also, it is not recommended to amend the soil with compost or fertilizers. Native bulbs are suited to our soils so the best preparation you can do for your bulbs is to plant in the right location, as mentioned above. If you have problems with moles, then a bulb like checker lily might benefit from enclosing in an underground wire mesh container.

Bulb Placement

Native bulbs have a bigger visual impact – and greater benefits for pollinators – when planted in groupings of three to five or more. Place the bulbs in the planting hole at a depth of two to three times the bulb size with the roots pointing down. If it's hard to tell which end grows roots then it's safe to lay the bulb on its side. Cover the bulbs with soil and tamp lightly. You can pretty much leave your bulbs alone for the rest of their life. They don't want irrigation or fertilizing, but a top coating of compost once in a while will be appreciated. The first year your bulbs may not flower but by the second year you will have native flowering bulbs for wildlife and you to enjoy. Thank you for supporting Benton Soil and Water Conservation District's Native Plant Sale!

Seed Placement

For best results, plant in the fall or before April 1. Sprinkle seeds on prepared soil. Keep damp during germination. Cover seedlings with a thin ($\leq 1/8$ ") layer of soil, mulch, or sawdust to reduce water loss. Weed the area regularly.

References

Jenny Brausch (Thank you, Jenny!): www.bentonswcd.org/planting-tips-native-bulbs/
Pacific Horticulture Magazine, Oct.2005: www.pacifichorticulture.org/articles/native-plant-care/
Great Plant Picks, 2016: www.greatplantpicks.org/
NW Native Plant Journal, October 2012: www.nwplants.com/information/emag/vol9-10.pdf Kruckeberg, Arthur R. 1996. "Gardening with Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest"
American Meadows Society, 2016: www.americanmeadows.com/how-to-plant-flower-bulbs

