

Planting Tree Seedlings

Planting tree seedlings is fun and can be a great family activity!
Here are a few tips and tricks that will help ensure your seedlings survive.

General Care

Provide your seedling with appropriate light, nutrients, moisture, protection and space along with some tender loving care to get great survival and growth.

Transportation and Storage

- Seedlings come in bundles of 10 plugs with up to 10 bundles in a plastic bag. Most cars have capacity for at least 1,000 seedlings depending on the size of the vehicle.
- As much as possible keep seedlings cool, moist (not wet) and dark until planted (like in a garage).
- Do not leave them in the sun, let them dry out or over heat.
- Handle with care: breaking buds, twigs and roots probably won't kill your seedling; however it adds stress to an already stressed organism and can affect the form of your future tree. Prune off broken twigs.
- Plant seedlings as soon as possible.



Site Selection

- Allow space for root and crown development away from buildings, sidewalks, power-lines, weeping-tiles and other trees
- Select tree species appropriate to the site. Consider soil conditions, moisture, amount of salt spray and growing space. Go to **to www.greenlegacy.ca**.

Planting

- Dig a hole deep enough so the root plug is covered but not bent or crushed.
- Unwrap and separate bundle of 10 seedling plugs. Take the seedling you are planting and protect remaining plugs in a bag or bucket.
- Minimize damage to roots, so do not break apart soil plug.
- Plant seedling upright and surround the entire soil plug with gently packed soil. All roots and stem below the root collar (swelling or colour change between root tissue and stem tissue) should be buried below ground level. The stem and leaves of the tree should be exposed.
- Ensure good contact between the soil plug and the backfill soil—no air pockets. Soil should be tight enough to provide support for the tree and loose enough that roots can easily extend into the soil.
- Fertilizing after planting is not required. A little bonemeal in the backfill soil may improve rooting.

After Planting Care

- Water at the time of planting helps settle the soil and give the seedling a good start.
- One deep soaking of 6 litres/seedling/week provided is optimal on moderate to well drained sites. Small amounts of water encourage shallow rooting, which is not helpful in a drought. Adequate water is most critical for the first couple of seasons.

Weed Control

- Controlling competition is critical for the first couple of years.
- Remove competing vegetation within 25 cm of the seedling. Hand pulling, roto-tilling, ploughing or herbicide are effective before planting.
- Mulch, hand pulling, mowing, and spraying are effective after planting; however considerable caution is required to protect trees when mowing and spraying.
- In the fall, remove overtopping grass and weeds to minimize snow load and rodent damage

Mulch

- A layer of mulch (5cm thick) spread like a donut (do not pile mulch up against the stem) around the seedling will improve survival and growth tremendously by reducing weed competition, holding moisture in the ground, reducing the surface temperature of the soil in the summer and reducing cover for tree-chewing rodents.
- Landscape fabric, woodchips or sawdust (20 L or 2 full pails/tree) make effective mulch. A mulch mat, a few layers of cardboard, or several layers (10-20) of newspaper under the mulch will make the mulch last longer. Manure makes poor mulch because it can burn the trees.



Tree Guards

- Hardwoods are particularly susceptible to rodent damage, which can be minimized with plastic tree wraps. The bottom of the tree guard must be tucked into the mulch or soil so rodents cannot get under it; and care should be taken winding the wrap so as not to scrape tender young bark. These guards must be checked annually to ensure they do not choke the tree or hold moist debris against the trunk.

We would love to know how your Green Legacy tree planting went! Is there anything we can do better?

Please send us your photos or email us at: jessicat@wellington.ca. Thank you for participating in the Green Legacy Programme and helping to make the County a little greener!



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