

# Treeways

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Watering is the most critical item when establishing new trees and shrubs. Most trees that die during the first year die due to lack of adequate watering or excess watering.

When trees are grown for future replanting at your home they must eventually be dug from a growing field. The digging process cuts off from 50-95% of a tree's existing root system depending on the size of the tree being dug. When this stressed tree is planted in a new location the first thing it needs to do is grow a new root system. Until the new root system is established the tree will not be able to grow to its genetic potential and that is why newly planted trees don't seem to grow much for the first years after planting. This is also why watering is so critical that first year.

The larger the transplanted tree, the longer the time it takes to grow a new root system and that is why planting smaller trees may actually get you healthier, large trees faster than transplanting gigantic trees. The economics are better too because with tree size it's time or money.

The most common problem that occurs when a tree is planted is installing the new tree too deeply. I call this burying a tree, not planting it. Installing too deeply predisposes the tree to an early death when it strangles itself with its own roots. More than an entire generation of city trees have been buried too deep and will never reach their full beautiful potential and many will die an early, slow death due to strangulation by stem girdling roots.

A properly planted tree should be installed with its 1<sup>st</sup> order roots no more than 1 inch below the soil surface. Planting deeper will not make a tree stand straighter or be more stable and in fact the opposite is true. I have found that trees planted at the correct depth are less likely to need staking than trees buried too deep. Planting too deep is a mistake that is 100% correctable at planting.

If stem girdling roots are discovered on a previously planted landscape tree within 5-7 years after it is installed, corrective surgery and root treatment may be successfully performed. After 7 years from planting it becomes less and less likely that stem girdling roots can be effectively treated. Planting a tree is not rocket science however planting a tree properly is a great first step toward a long beautiful and useful life.

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