

Fruit and Native Tree Planting & Care Instructions

After Tree Pickup

- Keep roots of bare-root trees moist. The packing bag is only meant for temporary storage (up to 24 hours). Roots can be soaked 30 minutes prior to planting.
- Ideally plant bare-root trees immediately. The trees can also be temporarily “stored” by planting the bundles’ roots in the ground in shaded location for a few days.
- Potted trees can be stored longer as long as they are watered, but they should be planted before their growth period.

Soil Preparation

- Soil PH is important for optimal nutrient uptake. Natural PEI soil tends to be acidic – in the 5.0 – 6.0 range. Add Lime to increase PH as required.
- Cheap soil test kits can be bought at Canadian Tire or Amazon.
- Apple and Pears prefer a slightly acidic to neutral PH of 6.0 – 7.0.
- Stonefruit (Cherry, Plum, etc) can tolerate a slightly acidic soil of 5.5 – 6.5.
- Native trees such as Pine, Spruce and Oak do not require PH modification.
- Remove as much thick sod as possible and cultivate the soil area slightly larger than the space the roots require.

Planting / Graft union

- In most cases keep the graft union about 4 – 6 inches above the final soil level. (Send Robert a picture if you cannot identify the graft.)
- It is OK for apples with Geneva (e.g. G969) rootstocks if the graft union is higher.
- Apricots or Apple trees grafted on seedling rootstocks should have the graft buried.
- Do not plant Fruit trees in low lying areas where water pools or does not drain well.
- Tamp the soil with your feet more than you probably think it should be.

Fertilizer

- There are too many products and scenarios to provide safe and accurate fertilizer recommendations. Be sure to use well composted material and follow synthetic fertilizer directions. When in doubt – it’s best to under-fertilize vs. over-fertilize.

Watering

- Depending on the amount of rain, be sure to water trees 2 times a week throughout the first year to a soil penetration depth of 12”. Mulching helps keep the soil moist.

Pest Protection

- One of the most important recommendations for tree care is trunk protection against mice, voles, rabbits, etc.

- The best product is 1/4" galvanized wire mesh, formed in a circle with a 8-12" diameter and at least 12" high, mounted to the ground with landscape staples.
- The typical white plastic spiral guards ideally should only be used during the winter months. When used in summer they are a perfect home for earwigs which can ruin the bark of the tree.
- Evergreen trees generally do not require trunk protection.

Staking / Tree Support

- The single most important instruction for Fruit trees is they must be supported by staking or trellising.
- Think about Hurricane Fiona to determine if you planned tree support system will hold up. Also keep in mind the weight of 100-200 lbs of fruit on a mature tree.
- The cheapest and strongest method I know of is one or two fence-style cedar posts attached to the tree with galvanized wire inside of a hose.
- T-bar and other slim metal posts tend to wiggle around in the ground too much.
- Skinny wooden stakes 2-3" in diameter might be alright for the first year but they will rot within a couple years regardless if they're pressure treated.
- Garden enthusiasts with several trees may want to consider a wire trellis system.

Pruning / Training

- Pruning is complex topic that is difficult to cover in this small document.
- Unlike mail-order / big-box store trees that have heavily prune branches and roots for shipping, I generally do not prune the trees so that the customer can prune to their preferred system.
- Generally speaking, standalone Apple, Pear, and European plums are trained in an upright central leader style like a Christmas tree, with 3 – 6 main branches spaced evenly around/up the trunk of the tree.
- Japanese/hybrid plums are generally trained in an “open-centre” style, where the central trunk is removed 2-4ft above ground, leaving only a few main side branches.
- Apricots can be grown in a bush style.
- Trees trained for a trellis system are typically pruned so they’re tall and skinny with no major side branches.
- For young trees with long shoots such as Apple whips 4ft and higher, 5ft and higher Plums - the new branches tend to grow only from the outer 8 – 12 inches of buds. So be aware if you leave the tree unpruned it may grow out too lanky and top-heavy.
- Branches that grow out from the trunk at a sharp upright angle tend to be weaker long-term than branches that grow out at a more horizontal angle.