



Tree Planting

Recommended best practices for how to plant a small tree.



Planting a Tree

Young trees require approximately three years to establish a solid root system and strong trunk.

By following these planting tips, your tree will have a terrific start on a long and healthy life.

ReLeaf Petaluma's Tree Stewards will be happy to help with your tree care and maintenance questions: releafpetaluma@gmail.com.

For additional details and for assistance, check out [San Francisco Friends of the Urban Forest](#) [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#) and the [California Native Plant Society](#) websites.



Choose the Right Tree for the Location

[Review the Releaf Petaluma Plant Palette](#) to select the best tree for your location.

✓✓ Examine the direction and force of the wind as well as sun exposure at the planting location.

✓✓ Are there overhead wires? Nearby sidewalks or streets? Walls or structures next to the spot?

✓✓ Soil type: Petaluma tends towards heavier/clay soils.

✓✓ Tree size and shape: How big do you want your tree to be when it is mature and what tree shape best fits the location?

① For more information on choosing a tree, see the [Releaf Petaluma Plant Palette](#)



Choosing a tree suitable for the location is critical for the health and longevity of your tree. Be sure to review Releaf Petaluma's Plant Palette to select a great tree for your spot.

Prepare a Proper Hole

- ✓✓ The width of the planting hole should be three times wider than the container that it is being taken from.
 - ✓✓ The hole should be just deep enough that the flare of the trunk is above ground and visible.
 - ✓✓ It is best to plant a tree slightly too high rather than too low as it will settle lower over time.
- ① For more information on planting a tree, see [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) or the [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#).



A suitable hole size allows for your new tree to root successfully and maintain strength.

Prepare and Protect the Rootball

- ✓✓ If the roots at the bottom of the soil are bound to each other, gently tease apart the roots and break the pattern.
- ✓✓ Discourage any large circling roots by gently disentangling them from the root ball.
- ✓✓ The roots should be heading downward into the soil for optimal growth.
- ✓✓ Add a gopher basket if gophers are (or could become) present. Slip the basket over the root ball and place into the hole. Again, make sure that the flare of the trunk is above the soil.

① For more information on planting a tree, see [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) or the [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#).



New trees may have a root ball containing a compressed root system and will need some preparation to give the tree the best start possible.

Backfill the Hole

✓✓ Place soil back into the hole being sure to tamp down and settle the soil, eliminating pockets of air along the way.

✓✓ If needed, you can add amendments at this time to particularly heavy or sandy soils to assist the establishment of new roots.

✓✓ Use the handle of your shovel - held upside-down - to pack the soil around the rootball.

✓✓ Create a berm of soil 2-3" high around dripline of tree to hold water in place.

① For more information on planting a tree, see [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) or the [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#).



Filling the hole back with soil requires paying attention to removing air pockets and settling the soil into place for the strength and health of your new tree.

Watering Your Newly Planted Tree

- ✓✓ Water the tree slowly with 5 gallons of water at time of planting.
- ✓✓ Water the new tree with 1.5 gallons every day after the first watering, for one month and every other day for the next couple of months. After this, the tree will need water every 7-10 days to help the roots to establish.
- ✓✓ After 1-2 years once a native tree has established, water deeply (about 5-10 gallons) once a month.
- ✓✓ Be sure to get to know your tree. It will be the best indicator of its needs.

① For more information on watering a new tree, see the [California Native Plant Society](#), [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) or the [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#).



Your new tree requires careful watering and attention as the roots establish.

Applying Mulch

- ✓✓ Avoid mulch made of rubber, rocks, decomposed granite, weed cloth, artificial turf, or plastic.
 - ✓✓ Add organic mulch, giving the flare of the trunk room to breathe.
 - ✓✓ Keep organic mulch away from the trunk of the tree to avoid keeping the trunk too wet.
- ① For more information on mulching, see [Friends of the Urban Forest](#) or the [Sacramento Tree Foundation](#).



Mulching will help to manage weeds and preserve the water content of the soil, making tree maintenance easier over the long run.

Where to Buy Your Plants

- Go to ReLeaf Petaluma's Planting Palette and click on any of the recommended plants to go to Calscape.org and find mapping of nurseries in our area that usually carry that plant.
- Some of the recommended plants may be found at local Petaluma nurseries and garden centers such as Harmony Farm and Friedmans. There is wider availability at Urban Tree Farm and Cal Flora near Santa Rosa.
- Call ahead for availability. For help siting or funding your tree or shrub, contact us via email at releafpetaluma@gmail.com
- To donate to ReLeafPetaluma to fund trees for others, go to our web site <https://www.releafpetaluma.org/take-action>