The fundamental considerations and subtle nuances of growing and caring for trees are beyond the scope of this introduction to bare root tree care. Please see our website where we offer excellent books on fruit tree care, as well as instructional videos and articles.

Receiving Your Trees: When you receive your trees, they will be boxed securely with their roots wrapped in plastic and their limbs and roots trimmed back (not fully pruned) to fit the package. First, inspect the bag and make sure that the media around the roots is moist. In the event that the media requires additional moisture, use a clean spray bottle to moisten it evenly. If you are not ready to plant upon arrival, see the “Heeling in” section below. Make sure your tree’s roots do not freeze hard. Place them in a sheltered location like a garage if you expect a freeze before your trees are planted. It is essential that the young tree roots have plenty of time to become established before the tree begins its spring limb growth and bud break, so plant the tree while it is in deep dormancy.

Heeling In: When your bare root trees arrive, open the plastic bags immediately. It is best to plant right away, within a week of delivery, however if you cannot plant right away, you may “heel in” the trees to protect them and keep them alive (but still dormant) until you are able to plant them in their permanent spot.

Outdoors: To heel in bare root trees outside, pick a location that is shielded from wind. Dig a trench about twice as deep as the roots are long, with one side of the trench sloping at a 45° angle. Place the tree roots side down, so that the trunks are supported by the sloping side. Cover the roots with sawdust, dirt, wood shavings, but don’t use cedar or redwood shavings because they are toxic to the trees, be sure to keep the root area moist, and gently tamp down to avoid air pockets. Periodically check the root area, keeping the soil moist.

Indoors: To heel in bare root trees indoors, whether due to snow or a frozen ground, choose a cool place like a root cellar, basement, or garage. It’s important to choose a place where the temperature stays between 38°F and 45°F. This is important so the tree roots neither freeze, nor does the tree break dormancy. Place the roots in a container and cover the roots with sawdust, dirt, wood shavings, but don’t use cedar or redwood shavings because they are toxic to the trees, and be sure to keep the root area moist. See our “Heeling in Bare Root Trees” video for more details.

Check Out Our How-to Videos & Blogs
www.groworganic.com/organic-gardening

Videos
How to Heel In Bare Root Trees
How to Plant a Tree
Fruit Tree Spraying
How to Prune a Fruit Tree
Fertilizing Fruit Trees

Blogs
Summertime Fruit Tree Care
Pruning Science: How Trees Heal
How to Choose the Right Pruning Tool
The Best Pollination for Your Fruit Trees
Debunking Bare Root Fruit Tree Myths