

CONTAINER PLANTING GUIDE

FROM THE
ANDERSON'S
FRUIT GROWING GUIDE
BY MARK ANDERSON

CONTAINER PLANTING GUIDE

During the growing season, larger and more mature plants, such as fruit & shade trees, shrubs, vines, and small fruits are sold in containers. Container plants have multiple benefits over bare root.

- 1) Container plants have more established root systems and the fine root hairs have not been disturbed by recent excavation.
- 2) Container plants can be kept and stored (in a protected, shaded place) for the entire growing season without need for repotting.
- 3) Container plants are fully leafed out or even in bloom, and you have a better idea of what your finished product will look like.

After purchasing, make sure to handle plants gently when transporting them to their new home. Immediately upon arrival at home, soak the root balls with water or a root stimulator solution before planting to fully hydrate the root system. Don't forget to water the tops as well, and place the plants in a partially shady location until planting. If you are unable to plant them for a few days or even weeks, make sure to water them daily to keep the root ball moist. One significant cause of failure when planting is that the delicate feeder roots get dried out and lose viability. Keep those roots moist!

Dig the holes 2-3 times larger than the diameter of the pot the plant is in, and deep enough so that the graft or crown of the roots will be just above the soil line. Try and match up the soil line in the pot with the soil line in your garden if possible. Remove any rocks or debris from the soil excavated from the hole. Add 25-30% of a compost or planting mix to the soil to help with drainage and moisture absorption. If your soil has a high clay content or if you encounter hardpan at the bottom of the hole, it may help to dig the holes extra deep, then backfill with your soil mix to the correct depth. In heavy clay soils, we also recommend digging deeper around the outside of the hole, so that the center is higher, allowing excess water to drain away from the root system. Many newly planted trees and shrubs die from poor drainage and standing water more than from lack of water.

Before planting (or right after planting), prune off any broken, dead or damaged, crisscrossing, and excess branches. Also, it never hurts to trim the excess foliage or even branches back/off by 15-25%. This will help eliminate stress from the roots that have been damaged from removal from the pot, planting and transport. Don't prune the roots, crush the root systems or damage the fine root hairs when removing the pot or when planting.

Add an inch or two of the soil/compost mixture into the bottom of the hole. Add a generous amount of Myke Tree and Shrub transplanter to the bottom of the hole and sprinkle the roots as well, so that they are evenly covered. Myke is a natural fungus that has a symbiotic relationship with your plant's roots that creates its own microscopic root system that searches out water and nutrient to sustain its host. This dramatically increases root development and mass, and the overall health of the new addition to your garden.

When removing the plant from the container, handle the plant gently by lifting the container rather than the plant itself. Close to the newly excavated hole, turn the pot on its side and gently tap or push on the sides of the container, rotating 1/4 turn three times, until there is a slight gap between the pot and the soil. Carefully grab the stem of the plant with one hand, and hold the pot with the other, and the root ball should slide out easily and is ready to place in the hole.

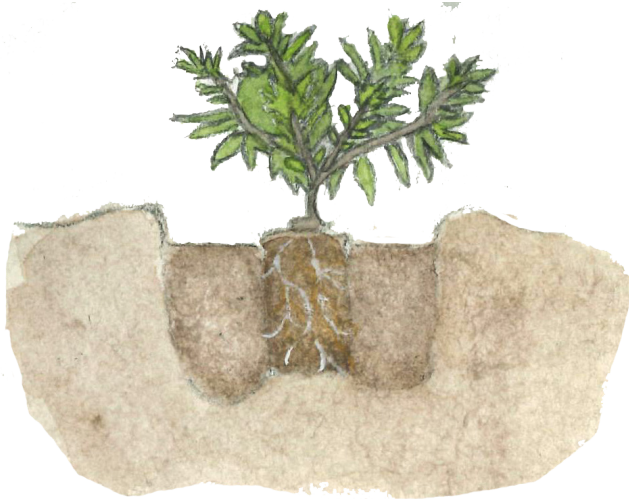
Position the tree or plant in the hole so that the graft (the large knobby part found right between the trunk and the roots) or the crown (where the stem or leaves come out of the roots) is about 1 inch above the final soil line.

If this graft is placed below the soil line, the tissue of the trunk can rot or send up unwanted suckers. If it is placed too high, the root tissue may be damaged by exposure to sunlight and weather extremes.

Fill the hole back in with the soil mixture. For every 3-4 inches of soil added, compact the loose soil around the root ball with your foot or hands. Tamp the soil down gently to remove air pockets. Fill the hole until the soil is back even with the existing soil line. Build up the soil in a ring around the outside diameter of the hole to make a nice, shallow pool to contain water, allowing it to soak in slowly and not run off.

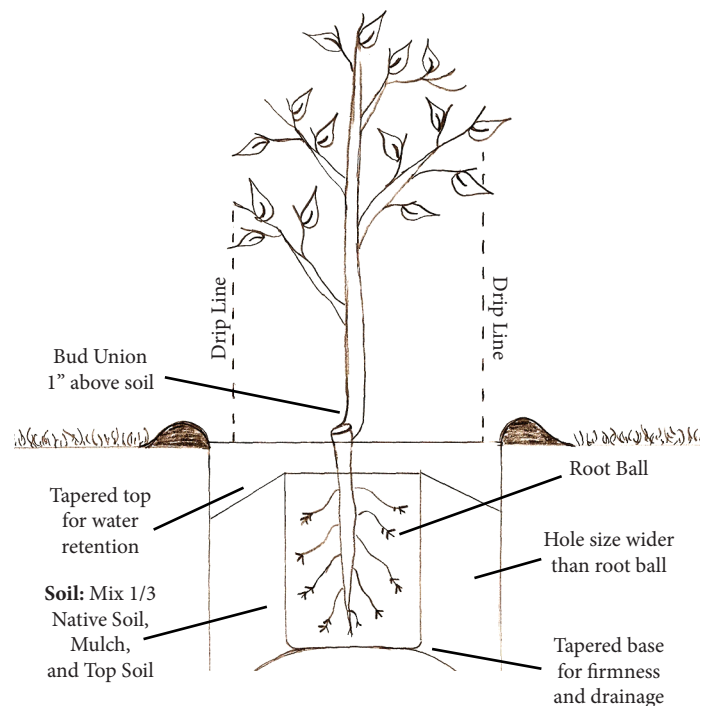
Water thoroughly with the water or Root Stimulator (Kangaroots is our all-time favorite natural root drench) mixture used to soak the trees. Mix up more as needed. Water gradually until the soil is completely moist. DO NOT OVER WATER. Depending on the daytime temperatures and the soil type, most trees and shrubs will only need watering once every 5-10 days. The best way to determine when to water is to dig down into the soil mix 6-8 inches away from the trunk. If the soil is still damp down 2-3 inches, then you can wait another day or two to water. Check the soil again before watering. When the soil is feeling dry at 2-3 inch depth, then it is time to water again. Make sure to use enough water to saturate the soil mixture completely. We recommend using the Root Stimulator on new bare root plants for the first 3-4 waterings.

Newly transplanted plants require minimal fertilizer the first year. A slow release nitrogen with micro-nutrients like Fertilome Start-N-Grow or Natural Guard Organic Plant Starter with natural microbes and bio-stimulators would be excellent choices to feed a new plant all year long with one or two applications. The most important fertilizer you can give your new plants is the first 3-4 applications of root stimulator when watering - it will quickly prepare the roots for establishment in their new home and build a strong foundation for new growth.



Cross Section of Container Planting

Notice the width of the hole compared to the rootball of the shrub or tree, the soil is slightly higher in the middle for good drainage, and the soil level of the new plant matches the natural soil line.





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