



CHIPPEWA/LUCE/MACKINAC CONSERVATION DISTRICT
2847 ASHMUN STREET
SAULT STE. MARIE, MI 49783
906-635-1278 WWW.CLMCD.ORG

If You Can't Plant Your Trees NOW, Here's How to Care for Them

Your trees and shrubs are packed with moist packing materials and wrapped in a water resistant paper or plastic bag. They *should* (but this is not a guarantee!) be OK in this wrapping for up to a couple of weeks, IF you take the following precautions:

WHERE TO KEEP YOUR TREES: Keep them some place cool and dark. They are shipped dormant, and the idea is to keep them from 'breaking bud' as long as possible. A cement floored garage or basement, a root cellar, or even a refrigerator are ideal. Whatever you do, keep them out of the sun and wind; keep them as cool as possible; but don't let the roots freeze if we have a below-freezing night temperature.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR TREES: Keep the roots moist but not 'swimming'. If you keep the trees wrapped, you likely will only need to add any water once a week. Try not to wash all of the soil particles off of the roots, though, as they contain beneficial fungi (mycorrhizae) that help the seedlings get established and thrive. Regardless, **DO NOT LET THE ROOTS DRY OUT!**

If you absolutely can't plant the trees within two weeks, or if they are breaking bud, you can preserve them longer by heeling them in. Dig a trench in an area that's somewhat protected from wind and full sun; lay the roots in without 'J-rooting' (bending the roots upward); pack soil tightly around the roots; and keep the trees moist. You can keep them this way indefinitely, but be aware that they will undergo a bit less (transplant shock) if you replant them when they are dormant in early spring.

CARE OF THE TREES DURING PLANTING: Care of the seedlings during the planting process is critical if you want the best survival possible. It is very important to keep the roots moist before the seedlings are planted. Ten minutes of air drying on a warm, sunny, breezy day can reduce seedling survival and growth as much as 50 percent. To prevent damage to the roots only carry as many seedlings as you can plant in ten minutes. Keep the remaining seedlings in the shade, the roots covered and moist until you are ready to plant them. The illustrations on the back show the proper technique for planting bare root seedlings. Several points that should be emphasized are: (1) Plant seedlings just slightly deeper than they were planted in the nursery. You can tell the depth in the nursery by a slight color change on the stem. (2) Make sure the hole is big enough to allow the roots to be spread out in it. (3) Be sure the roots are pointing straight down in the hole and are not J-rooted, and pack soil tightly so that there are no air pockets around the roots.

FERTILIZING AND WATERING: Fertilizer contains three essential elements: Nitrogen (N) - Phosphorus (P)- Potassium (K). These three elements are represented by numbers representing N, P, and K in that order (i.e. 10-10-10, 0-15-15, etc.). It is important to understand that nitrogen promotes top growth and phosphorus and potassium promotes root growth. If you choose to fertilize at planting time, apply a fertilizer with low to no nitrogen, such as 0-15-15, to promote root growth. Next year, you may use a higher nitrogen fertilizer (10-10-10) in spring to promote shoot production and a low-nitrogen fertilizer (0-15-15) in the fall as they go dormant.

For trees/shrubs with a trunk diameter less than one inch, apply a couple of tablespoons of fertilizer around the drip line (outer area under tree canopy) during the appropriate times listed above. Do not put fertilizer against the bark!

Thank you for planting!