In most of Mohave County where elevations are less than 5000’ October and November are two of the best months to plant a new tree. By planting early fall you are encouraging a healthy root system to develop. Root growth will continue to develop thru the winter months while the tree is dormant.

Before digging the hole locate power lines, sewer lines, leach lines, underground utilities, and know the height and width the tree will obtain at full growth. Your newly purchased tree in the container looks pretty small at the moment, but what will it look like in five years.

Planting Steps for Trees Purchased in Containers

First, make a circle three to five times bigger than the root ball. Dig this area no deeper than the depth of the root ball, and do not amend soil. If you encounter hard pan or caliche your best option is to select another location.

Second, always handle the tree by the container or the root ball, never by the trunk or branches. Remove the tree from the container with as little disturbance as possible of the root ball. Place large containers on their sides and tap them with a hammer or other blunt instrument. This will
usually free the walls so you can slide the root ball out. Always score the root ball to disturb the surface and to cut any circling roots. This encourages roots to grow into the surrounding soil. Make a vertical cut one-fourth to one half inch deep four times around the sides and twice across the bottom.

Third, place the root ball in the hole keeping the top of the root ball level or slightly above the finished grade. Do Not plant the root ball any deeper than it was in the container. This will prevent crown rot and other problems. Before you start to fill the hole, step back and look to see if the tree is standing straight. Check both east-west and north-south. Fill the hole with un-amended soil.

Fourth, remove the nursery stake and ties. Do not prune unnecessarily. Remove only dead, broken or diseased branches, the use of clean, sharp bypass pruners are recommended.

Fifth, form an irrigation well at the edge of the root ball. Irrigate the tree and the entire tilled area. Apply enough water to thoroughly wet the soil to the depth of the root ball. This will eliminate air pockets without compacting the soil. More soil may have to be added after the first irrigation.

The end result should have the appearance of a giant ant hill.

Sixth, mulch the entire tilled area with three to four inches of organic material. Keep the mulch away from the base of the tree.

Planting Bare Root Trees

Bare root trees are generally deciduous trees. (Trees that loose their leaves and go dormant for the winter) They are readily available from any reputable nursery, and are easily shipped to you. If you are having a tree shipped to you the nursery will usually let you know when to expect its arrival. It is of the utmost importance to get that tree planted as soon as you receive it. Have the hole dug and ready for planting in advance of the trees arrival. If you are purchasing a bare root tree from a local nursery protect the root system from drying out while transporting the plant
home. Even though the plant is dormant, the root system can be damaged by exposing it to drying wind.

First, make a circle approximately five feet in diameter and dig this area approximately three feet deep. This may sound a bit big, but you will need to extend the roots fully. Keep this soil close as you will need it to back fill the hole. If you encounter hard pan or caliche your best option is to select another location.

Second, form a mound of soil similar to a pyramid in the center of the tree hole. Place your tree in the center of the pyramid. Extend the roots to their fullest length, without bending or crowding them. This will encourage the roots to grow out forming a strong root base and not circle back, choking itself. Do Not plant the tree any deeper than it originally was. Many trees are grafted on appropriate root stock, and the area where the rootstock is grafted can be detected by the characteristic of a bend. The graft union should be approximately two inches above the soil line.

Third, make sure the tree is standing straight, checking both east-west and north-south,

Fourth, remove any nursery stakes and ties. Do not prune unnecessarily. Remove only dead, broken or diseased branches, the use of clean, sharp bypass pruners are recommended

Fifth, back fill the hole with the original soil you have set aside. Water the entire hole thoroughly to settle the soil and remove any air gaps. Additional soil may be needed after the initial watering. Use any remaining soil to construct a water basin that is initially the same diameter as the length of the longest root. Gradually widen the basin as the tree becomes established. Trees absorb most of their water at the drip line, which is an imaginary vertical line extended from the outermost branch tips of a tree to the soil directly below.

Whether you are planting a bare root or container tree, it is not recommended to use manure during the initial planting. The use of manure may burn the newly developing root hairs which are vital to the health of your tree. If you feel the need for a soil additive use peat moss. One part peat moss to six parts soil is adequate. Do Not fertilize trees that are newly planted in the
fall, it is best to wait until spring when they begin to bud, and follow the manufactures
recommendation.

For more information contact The University of Arizona Mohave County Cooperative Extension
at 101 E. Beale Street, Suite A, Kingman or telephone 928-753-3788

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GARDENING” WORKSHOP, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2008, 9:45 AM TO
12:15 PM. IF YOU ARE NEW TO THE AREA AND WANT TO START PLANTING
AND PREPARING YOUR YARD THIS WORKSHOP IS FOR YOU! THE
WORKSHOP WILL BE HELD AT THE MOHAVE AG CENTER, 101 E. BEALE
STREET, KINGMAN. SEATING IS LIMITED SO CALL 928 753-3788 TO
RESERVE YOU SPACE.

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KINGMAN IS GROWING! Column

Proper Tree Staking
Part 2 of 2
By Linda Reddick, Kingman Area Master Gardener

It truly saddens me to drive around town and see so many trees improperly staked. Some of the trees have been left improperly staked so long they are showing signs of stress, oozing sap and literally struggling for survival.

This wire and rubber tubing should have been removed several years ago. The tree has grown into the wire causing stress lesions and pockets of sap oozing. 

photo by L. L. Reddick
The health of your tree is at stake, so let’s look at some proper tree staking techniques.

Stake trees ONLY if they cannot stand without support or if threatened by wind, heavy frost or other natural problems.

1. Remove any nursery stakes and ties. They were intended for shipping purposes only; they were NOT intended to remain on or next to the tree after it has been planted.

2. Use only two stakes, preferably two inches round or square. Place them outside the root ball and irrigation well, inserting them at least six inches below undisturbed soil, at right angles to the prevailing wind. If you are not sure which direction your prevailing wind is, just look around your neighborhood.

3. Horticultural tape can be used to tie small trees. Tie wire and webbing can be used for larger trees with thick bark. If using tie wire, thread it through an old piece of garden hose, or rubber tubing. The garden hose or tubing should be just long enough to loop around the trunk. Twist the wire at both ends of the hose or tubing to prevent it from moving along the wire. You do not want the wire to come in contact with the tree at any time. This method has been used for many years however; it can be harmful to the tree. Using
wire and hose requires you to check the staking at least weekly to be sure the wire is not rubbing the tree and to adjust the loop to the trees growth. Rubber tree ties have been available for many years now. They have the advantage of stretching if they become too tight. A newer product, called ArborTie, is polypropylene webbing that is tied around the tree using a unique knot and nailed or tied to the wooden stake. The knot prevents the webbing from tighten around the trunk. This is the best tree tying system. Whichever tie system is used, it should have the ability to move slightly from side to side. This allows the trunk to build reaction wood, which strengthens the trunk with time.

4. To determine the height to place the ties, hold the trunk with one hand a few inches above the ground. If the trunk leans over, move a few inches up the trunk and try again. Continue until you find the lowest point at which it will not bend. Place the ties about six inches above this point. Attach only one tie to each stake.

5. To minimize damage to tree limbs, cut the stakes four to six inches above the ties.

6. Check staked trees periodically, preferably once a month, and loosen the ties as needed. Ties that grow into the tree will cause damage.
7.8. Remove the stakes as soon as a tree can stand on its own; almost always within one year of planting.

The underlying goals are to increase trunk diameter and promote root growth into the surrounding soil. Use care not to over-irrigate as this often limits root growth and allows the root ball to move with the trunk. As always it is better to water slowly and deep, rather than shallow and quick.

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