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BAREROOT FRUIT TREE CARE

Shopping List:

- Dormant oil and sprayer (copper spray too for stone fruits)
- Plant Success fertilizer with mycorrhizae
- Pruners
- Soil Conditioning compost (top-dress after planting)

How should I take care of my bareroot tree until it is planted? What happens if it gets frozen?

If you aren't able to plant your trees within 48 hours, "heel" the tree roots either laying them down and covering root system with soil/ mulch/ compost (our fav is to use the Soil Conditioner listed above). You can also stand them up, lean them against something and do the same thing. Once planted, the tree is safe from freezing temperatures. If the tree happens to get frozen while above ground, let it thaw slowly and avoid handling it when it is in this state. Chances are it will still push out come spring if the freezing duration was not long or frequent. Keep your trees cool, moist, out of the sun and above freezing until they are planted.

When should I plant?

Plant as soon as you can get a shovel in the ground. Mother Nature is better at taking care of her trees planted outside than sitting in a corner of your garage unplanted!

When you are ready to plant, it is ideal to soak the roots in a container of water for 3+ hours to help them hydrate, but for no more than 24 hours.

How should I prepare the hole and how deep should I plant the tree?

We recommend planting in native soil. The deeper and wider the hole the better. Loosening up the soil around the new root system aerates this soil. This extra oxygen in the soil plays a key role in root initiation. Plant your tree so that the graft union is visible at the soil line, not out of the ground and not buried under the soil. Why? Planting too low would cause suffocation from the lack of oxygen. Planting too high may cause anchorage problems, excessive sucker growth and a possible entry point for borers. Fruit trees like well-drained soil, not soils that stay boggy or wet. This is especially true of peaches, cherries, plums and apricots (stone fruits) which will not tolerate wet ground at all. Pear trees will tolerate the most water, while apple will tolerate some.

When should I fertilize?

At planting, the Plant Success product recommended above should be all you need. Once the tree has leafed out, you should fertilize it with an organic fruit tree fertilizer (ask us for a recommendation). The second year you can fertilize with a granular organic fruit tree fertilizer, applied 2-3 weeks before bud break – Late March in the Treasure Valley. Once a year should be sufficient.

Should I mulch?

Mulch can be laid around the tree in a 3-foot diameter circle to hold in moisture, control weeds and prevent lawn mower damage. Do not pile compost or mulch next to the tree trunk. We recommend Gardener & Bloome Soil Conditioning Compost with Mycorrhizae.

How much should I water?

Water your trees weekly with a slow, deep watering. Remember: Deep but infrequent. Why? Frequent, light watering will moisten the top roots of the tree, but neglect deeper roots and may force rooting near the surface where they are more drought susceptible. The tree can become stressed, weakened and more susceptible to disease and insects. A slow, thorough watering enables those deeper roots to be nourished and promotes healthy, strong growth.

What do I do to take care of pests?

Sucking insects such as aphids, mites and leafhoppers can drain those new leaves of color and vigor. These little fellows may require a hand lens to identify. Pesticides, even organic, are tools that should be used wisely. A young tree does not have many leaves and if they are damaged, you are reducing the food production potential of that tree which supplies energy and strength to the tree. Inspect weekly (when you are watering works nicely!) Look closely and carefully at both sides of the leaves to see if holes are appearing or if the color of the leaf is different.

We recommend a dormant oil preventive spray for many problems that occur on fruit trees. The second year, or once the tree starts to produce fruit, you will want to be mindful of the potential insects of the tree. See our “Codling Moth” recommendations for apple and pear trees, “borer” recommendations for stone fruits, and “Cherry Worm” recommendations for cherries.

Pruning – first year

Pruning back your brand new fruit tree right away will help you create the shape and harvestability you desire.

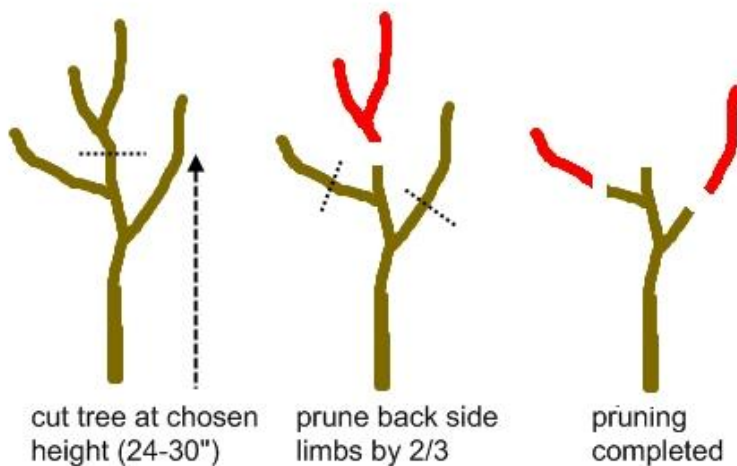
Apple trees should be shaped like a Christmas tree with longer limbs on the bottom and shorter and shorter limbs as you proceed up the tree. Another way would be to head back or shorten various limbs. Heading back limbs will force them to shoot side limbs approximately 12 inches below the new cut. The optimum angle for a side limb originating off the central leader would be 45 degrees. Peach and plum trees are trimmed to an open vase most often. In this case, a newly planted tree could be headed back, leaving 4-5 side limbs for the main structure of the tree. This pruning at planting time helps reduce the bud count, but also is used to start developing the ultimate shape of the tree.

Check out our YouTube channel, Garden Minutes, for an informative video on planting and pruning your new tree!

Scan QR code below with phone camera for instant link to video.



Pruning at Planting Time



Planting Bare-Root Trees

