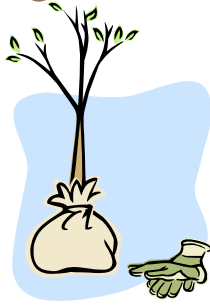


# Now is Bare Root Planting Season



This is the time of year when foothill garden stores, catalogs and nurseries offer bare root plants for sale. In simplest terms, bare root plants are dormant perennial plants, that are dug from soft planting material and then sold with the soil removed. The bare roots are usually wrapped in damp, but not wet, sawdust to keep them moist and pliable.

Vegetables such as artichokes, rhubarb and asparagus can also be purchased bare-rooted. It is common to see cane berries, grapes and fruit trees available in similar fashion. Ornamental deciduous trees and shrubs may also be available as bare root plants in late winter and early spring. Later in the season, the same trees and shrubs may be potted by the nursery and sold in containers. Because bare rooted plants are easier to transport, you can save money by purchasing in this form.

Because bare root plants have had their roots severely pruned, they are best planted during the cool dormant times of the year. The best time to plant here in the foothills is between November and early April. Once you have purchased your bare rooted plants, it is best to get them in the ground as soon as possible, but always before new growth begins.

Never let the roots dry out or get them too wet. Keep roots moist by wrapping them in wet newspaper and planting as soon as possible. Be sure to dig your planting hole before you unwrap the bare roots. Minimize exposing plant roots to the air. Trim any damaged or dead roots and branches before setting the plant in the planting hole. Don't prune healthy roots since they are already heavily pruned.

To get your plant off to a good start, dig a hole about three times larger than the bare root ball, and deep enough to allow the plant to sit at the same level it was growing at the nursery. Improper depth at planting is a leading cause of plant failure. Fill the hole with water, and wait for it to soak in before planting. Work soil in and around the roots while supporting the plant. Don't over compact the soil. Build a berm two to three inches high around the edge of the hole to form a water basin. Water again, then cover basin with mulch of bark, compost or wood chips.

Do not add fertilizer to the mixture as this can burn the newly developing roots. Light top dressing with a balanced fertilizer will be important a few weeks later. Most trees will benefit from having their trunks painted with white latex paint to prevent sunburn until the canopy develops and can shade the bark.

This article adapted from Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, USDA. Please contact Ken Churches at [cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cdcalaveras@ucdavis.edu) or (209) 754-6475 with your agricultural questions. To speak with a Certified Master Gardener: Calaveras (209) 754-2880, Tuolumne (209) 533-5696, Amador (209) 223-6837, El Dorado (530) 621-5543.