



Planting & Tree Care

Site Selection

One of the most important decisions you can make about the health and longevity of your new tree or palm is where to place it in your landscape. In order to select the right tree for the right place you must take into consideration its mature height and width along with the tree's soil, water & light requirements. Plant your tree in a place where it can attain its natural size and shape without needing a great deal of pruning to control its size in the future. Site conditions that should always be considered include the tree's distance to the house, sidewalks, driveway, light poles, fire hydrants, easements and other trees. Medium to large trees and palms should never be planted close to or underneath power lines.

[FPL's Right Tree Right Place](#)

Before planting, check to make sure that there are no utility conflicts in the area. There is a free service that will clearly mark the locations of utilities. <http://www.callsunshine.com/>

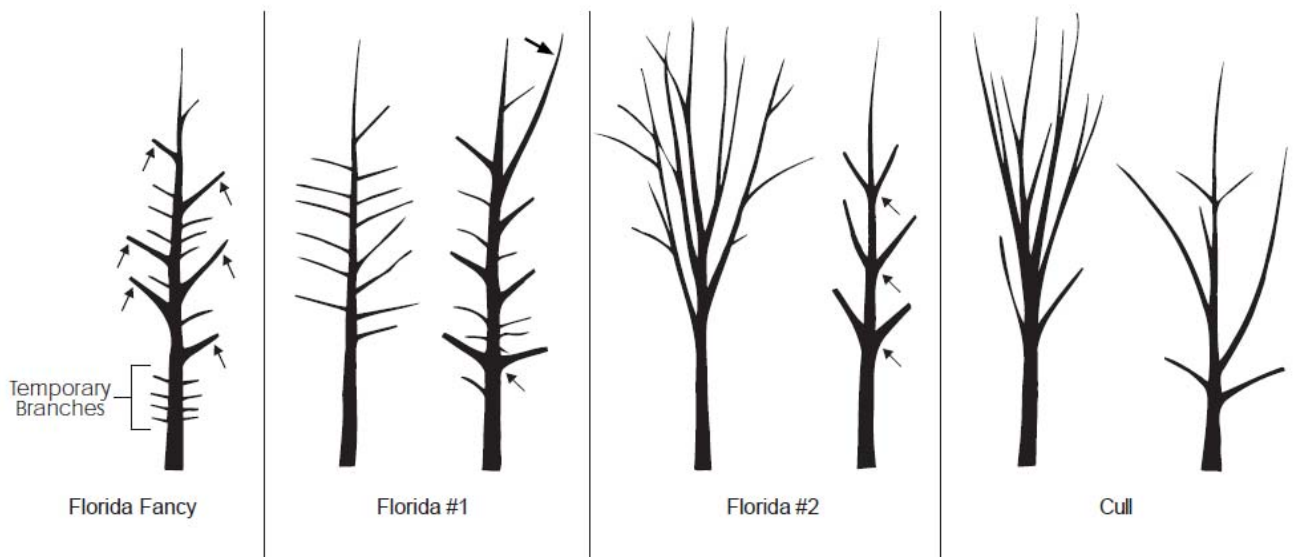
Choosing a Quality tree

Did you know that there are standards for tree quality? Here in Florida, there are 4 grades of trees: Florida Fancy, FL #1, FL #2, or a cull. The minimum quality that the City will allow to be planted is a FL #1.

Check here for more information on how to determine if your tree meets the minimum standard: Grades and Standards - <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/pubs.html>

A FL# 1 tree will have:

- good trunk form – usually one main trunk running up through the center of the tree canopy
- nice branch arrangement – sturdy branches spaced relatively evenly along the trunk



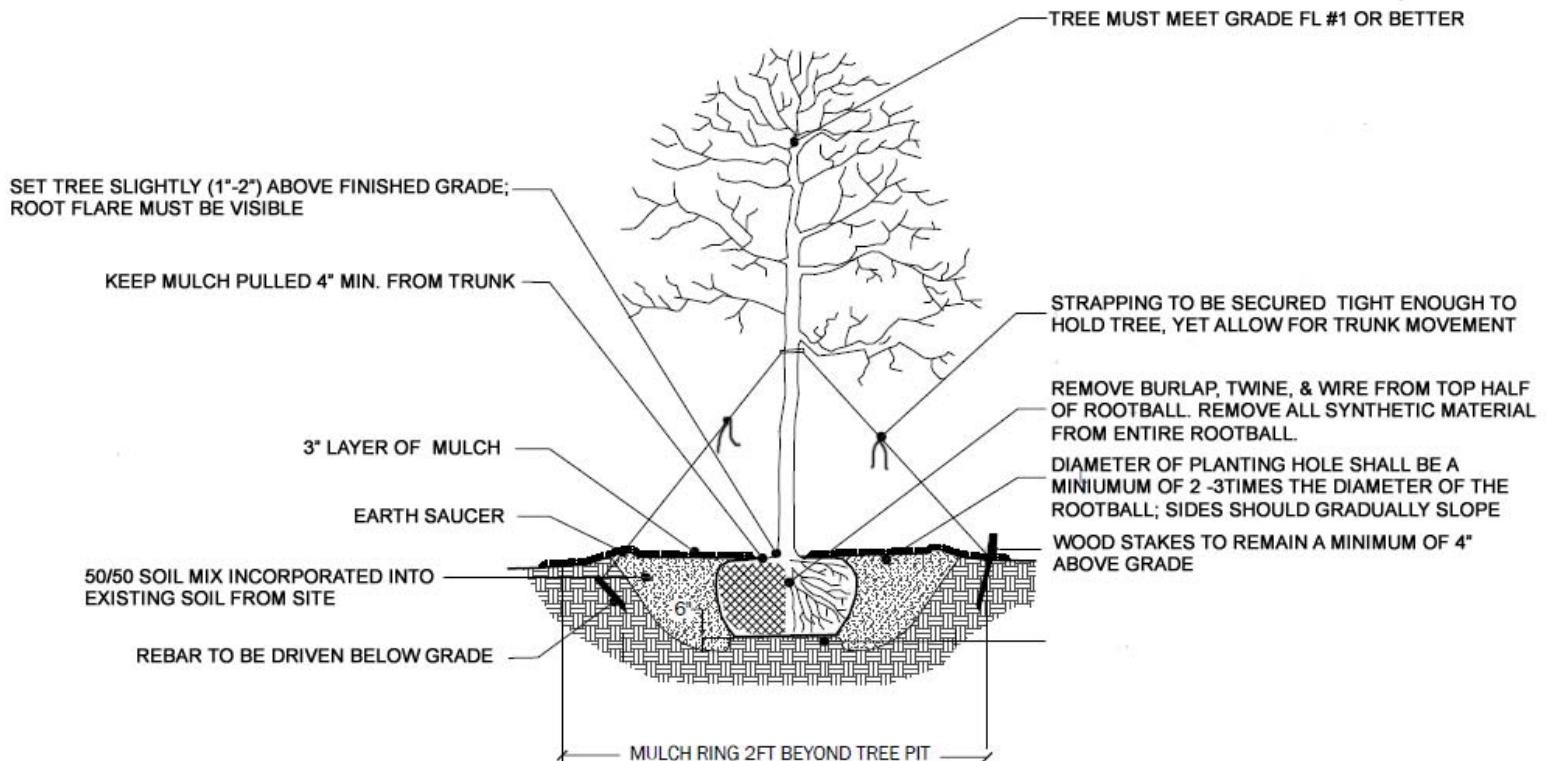
- appropriate trunk diameter relative to the rest of the tree
- good uniformity in the crown of the tree and relatively even distribution of branches

- healthy root system (not root-bound or having stem-girdling roots)

Planting your tree

Before digging the hole, first remove any excess soil from the top of the root ball to expose the “trunk flare.” The trunk flare (also known as the root flare) is the area where the trunk tapers out and meets the first significant roots. Check for any circling roots and remove them if present. Next, prepare the hole for planting by digging a hole 2-3 times the width of the root-ball, however, **DO NOT** dig the hole deeper than the root-ball. It is critical for the survival of the tree that it is not planted too deeply.

Remove the tree from the container without breaking up the root-ball. Carefully place the tree in the hole by holding the base of the trunk while supporting underneath the root system. Set the tree level and make sure that the trunk flare is about 1”-2” above the surrounding finished grade. As you begin to backfill the hole with soil, add water to the soil so that all of the air pockets are removed. Do not tamp down the soil or compact the area. The soil should be covering the sides of the root ball but do not add any excess fill on top of the root ball.



TREE PLANTING DETAIL

Fertilizing

While it is not necessary, a controlled-release fertilizer can be applied on top of the root ball or on top of the mulch at planting, if desired. There is no need to mix the fertilizer with the backfill soil or place it at the bottom of the planting hole. Spread the fertilizer evenly around the tree (not directly on the base). An 8-2-12 formula can be used for general applications to palms, trees and plants. When using turf fertilizers, be sure to purchase those specially formulated for southern lawns, i.e. those with low or no phosphorus. Be especially careful not to over fertilize. Be sure to follow all label directions. Remember: the label is the law.



Mulching

A light layer of mulch may be added in a very large circle around your newly planted tree. Pull mulch a minimum of 4 inches away from the trunk and it's best to keep it off of the actual root ball on a newly planted tree. The trunk flare should remain exposed. Use a light layer of mulch, a depth of 2" to 3" is best. Be sure not to create a "volcano" of mulch at the base of the tree; this leads to irregular root growth such as stem girdling roots. Done properly, a mulch ring can protect your tree from damage caused by string trimmers and lawn mowers.



Organic mulch around the base of a tree helps moisture retention, soil temperature moderation and weed prevention. Use a mulch circle with a minimum radius of 2 feet or more to keep string-trimmers at bay. Keep sod from growing into the mulch ring.



Do not build soil up over the root ball by adding walls & edging. If you add decorative features around your tree, do so without heaping extra soil upon the root ball area.

We recommend the use of eucalyptus or melaleuca mulch. The use of decorative rock placed over the root ball is not recommended.

Watering and Establishing

To establish the newly planted tree or shrub in your yard it is vital that you provide sufficient watering. A tree with a 1-inch trunk diameter will need at least 3 gallons of water per day. Hand watering with a garden hose is necessary to establish young trees and shrubs. Water the base of the tree daily for the 1st two weeks, then every other day for the next 4-6 weeks to give your trees a good start. From week 7 through week 12 you should continue to water the root ball once a week.

Irrigation from your sprinkler system does not provide enough water to establish a tree properly. It can take 3 to 6 months, or longer, for a small tree or large shrub to establish in South Florida. We have more information available about how you can water your plants properly and still meet water restrictions, if applicable. Signs of water stress include wilting, dropping of leaves, and the browning of tips and leaf edges.



Keep in mind that South Florida's "dry season" can begin as early as October and extends through April, May or June depending on when the rainy season begins again. Newly planted trees will continue to need regular watering during the dry season. After the tree is established it will usually not require additional watering.

Pest Management

There are several ways to manage pests in your garden without using pesticides. A strong spray from the garden hose will remove some pests. Other pests can be controlled by simply removing them by hand. There are many beneficial insects that will feed upon some of the pests in your garden. It is important to know that if you spray to kill some bad bugs, you will likely kill the good bugs, too (like our beautiful butterflies and other important pollinators). There are many home remedies for insect and disease control. To protect our ground water, always investigate the most ecologically friendly way to control pests in your yard.



Staking

If your newly planted tree is staked check the staking materials often to make sure that they are not being enveloped by new tree growth.

Remove staking materials when no longer needed to prevent girdling of the tree as it grows. Straps should be removed about 7 to 9 months after planting. Allow some room for normal sway in the wind; this promotes strong root and trunk development.

Some Tips for Palm Care

In general, palms are very easy to maintain. Yet, because most palms are not native to Florida, it is sometimes difficult for them to derive all their nutrients from our soils.

One of the most common reasons palms begin to decline is due to mineral deficiencies. Mineral deficiencies cause fronds to yellow. This problem can be easily remedied by fertilizing at regular intervals with a fertilizer that is formulated for palms.

Fertilize with a "palm special" type fertilizer a minimum of three times a year. Fertilize in March, June and October to prevent yellow or frizzled fronds.

Follow all fertilizer label directions. *Over-fertilization is harmful to your palms and to the environment.* Provide regular watering. Remove only spent fronds. Do not remove green fronds. Keep the base of the trunk clear of mulch and soil to prevent disease and decay.



Other Tips on Tree Care

Wounds invite disease. Take care not to damage tree trunks with 'weed whackers' or other lawn equipment. Inform your landscape maintenance company of this important note. It only takes one careless string-trimmer experience to kill a tree.