

# PROPERLY PLANTING A TREE THE EASY WAY!

Robert E. Call, Extension Agent, Horticulture, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Cochise County

Fall is a great time to plant trees and shrubs. Roots will become established for superior spring growth. Follow the instructions below for best success.



**1** Loosen soil 3 to 5 times the width of the tree root ball.



**2** Dig a hole only as wide and deep as the root ball.



**3** Remove the tree from the pot.



**4** Cut or score roots  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch with a knife to stimulate root growth and mitigate any potential circling roots.



**5** Place the tree in the hole on solid ground, slightly above ground level.



**6** Fill the hole with the same soil that was removed. No amendments, root stimulator, or fertilizers! When the hole is half filled with soil, water to remove air pockets.



**7** Finish filling the hole leaving a slightly depressed basin above the root ball.



**8** Water to settle all the soil around the root ball.



**9** If drip irrigation is used place tubing around the root ball.



**10** Always water out to the tree drip-edge (tips of the branches). Gradually reduce watering over several weeks.



**11** Spread mulch around the entire loosened soil area to conserve moisture, reduce weeds and cool the soil. Pull mulch away from the trunk.



**12** Mulch should be 3 to 4 inches deep. Use a soda, fruit or vegetable can to determine the proper depth.



**13** Prune off any broken, damaged or dead branches. Leave lower branches on the trunk ("trashy trunk"). Remove 1/3 of trunk branches each year after 3 years, to encourage trunk and root growth. Only use tree stakes if needed.



**14** Sit down, relax and enjoy your new properly planted tree!

Further information is available from the Arizona Cooperative Extension publication, "Planting Guidelines: Container Trees & Shrubs" AZ1022. <http://ag.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1022.pdf>.

Photos by Lori Kovash