



truckee meadows  
COMMUNITY  
FORESTRY  
COALITION

# TREE TOPICS in our community

Check out **Truckee Meadows Water Authority's Interactive Water-Efficient Landscape Guide** for a comprehensive database of trees and shrubs that thrive in our high desert climate:

[www.tmwlandscapeguide.com](http://www.tmwlandscapeguide.com).

## Participants

- City of Reno
- City of Sparks
- Community Services Agency
- Keep Truckee Meadows Beautiful
- Kennedy-Jenks Consultants
- Nevada Division of Forestry
- Nevada Landscape Association
- Nevada Shade Tree Council
- NV Energy
- Reno Urban Forestry Commission
- Signature Landscapes
- Truckee Meadows Water Authority
- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension
- Washoe County
- Washoe County Health District, Air Quality Division
- Washoe County Regional Parks & Open Space
- Western Regional Water Commission
- Wilbur D. May Arboretum

## Contact Information

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## Planting New Trees

### How do I select a tree?

When selecting a tree for planting there are many things to consider. It's best to match the type of tree to the site, judge environmental factors and look at the growth habits of a species. Other considerations:

- **Hardiness zone** — make sure the selected tree can tolerate the minimum temperatures in our area. Select species that are "hardy" to zone 3 (Sunset Western Garden Book) or zone 4 (USDA).

View a hardiness zone map online at <http://www.usna.usda.gov/hardzone/>.

- **Soils** — many urban planting sites have compacted soils and are lacking nutrients. Use a soil tiller and apply soil amendments to the site before planting. Consider an inexpensive soil test to really understand what your site needs before planting.

- **Light** — different species of trees tolerate sunlight differently. White birch and most pine trees don't like shade. Maples and linden trees perform well in shade.

- **Pests** — the best way to avoid pest problems is to avoid planting tree types that are known to be vulnerable to pests in our area. Species like goldenraintree and Gingko are pest resistant while elm is not.

- **Obstacles** — sidewalks, driveways, house foundations, overhead power lines and underground utilities are potential obstacles for tree root systems. The most common mistake made in matching a tree to a site is underestimating the size the tree will be at maturity. Look for mature examples of the variety you are considering in other landscapes around the area to see just how the tree would fit into the site you are considering. Trees like silver maple have invasive root systems that can damage property if planted in the wrong place. Ash, mulberry, and elm are shallow rooting while oak and pear are not.

Be sure to select a tree that meets the goals you have for your landscape. A fruit tree may be a desirable choice, or you may want to add bright fall colors to your yard.

### What should I look for when buying a tree?

There are three types of tree stocks to choose from:

1. **Bare root trees** are best planted in the non-growing season (late fall/early winter or late winter/early spring).

2. **Balled or burlapped trees** can be planted in spring, summer or fall as long as the root ball is kept moist. Be sure to remove the burlap or outer wire basket from the root ball when planting.

3. **Container trees** are commonly those that have root balls larger than 20 inches.

### In order to select a quality tree, look for:

- **Stock** — look for stock that is free of root defects such as kinked roots or circling roots.
- **Crown defects** — make sure the tree is proportioned correctly by evaluating the height-to-caliper (the diameter of the trunk) ratio and the caliper-to-root-ball ratio.
- **Trunk taper** — lack of taper can cause trees to fail in high winds.
- **Crown** — half or more of the leaves should be on branches originating on the lower two-thirds of the trunk. Top-heavy crowns get more wind stressed.
- **Branch pattern** — look for branches angled between 45 and 90 degrees. A tree with main leader branches cut back should not be purchased.
- **Vigor** — look for large, dark green leaves and smooth, bright bark. Roots should be white and fleshy; roots that are dry and dark may have been in the container too long.
- **Injuries** — plants with injured bark or with discolored trunks due to sunburn are less healthy.

### When is the best time to plant my new tree?

Spring and autumn are the best times to plant new trees in the Truckee Meadows. If the ground hasn't frozen, some trees may be planted during wintertime. It is best not to plant new trees in the summer.

### How do I plant my new tree?

#### Step 1 – Prepare the hole

Plant the tree no deeper than the root ball is tall. Dig the hole 18 to 24 inches wider than the root ball. If the soil is compacted, which is common in the Truckee Meadows, a hole three to five times the width of the root ball is recommended. The sides of the hole should be clogged and roughed up to promote root growth. Fill the plant hole with water while preparing the site to eliminate air pockets in the soil, preventing the root ball from sinking.

#### Step 2 – Set the tree

- Remove the wire basket covering the root ball
- Cut and remove twine from around the trunk and root ball
- Remove the burlap bag

#### Step 3 – Backfill the hole

A soil test is best for determining if soil improvements should be added to the tree planting site. Organic amendments are best for trees as manures tend to be high in urea which can burn new roots.

Build a watering basin from surrounding soil. Raise the edges of the basin about 4 inches and compact the sides to prevent erosion. Consider installing organic mulch, such as wood chips, around the watering basin to retain moisture. Be careful not to pile mulch against a tree's trunk as it can suffocate the tree.

#### Step 4 – Staking

Young trees may require staking during their first growth season to make sure they anchor properly in the ground. Stakes should be soft and loosely connected so not to damage the tree.

Refer to the [Staking](http://www.communityforestry.org) section at [www.communityforestry.org](http://www.communityforestry.org) for more information.