BARE ROOT FRUIT TREE CARE

WHAT ARE BARE ROOT TREES?

Bare root nursery stock refers to trees that are field-grown for one to three years, then dug up during dormancy and handled so that no soil is left around the roots.

WHY BARE ROOT?

Because BR fruit trees have uninterrupted root development (their roots have not been constricted in a container) they are free to penetrate and spread rapidly in their planting hole. The result is fast root generation and tree growth. Bare root fruit trees can double, even triple in size in one growing season and will provide fruit in 1-3 years depending on variety.

TOOLS & PREPARATION

Try to prepare your planting hole before you pick up your trees. Yes!, you will need a shovel!

RECEIVING YOUR TREES

When you pick up your trees from Fig Earth Supply, the roots will be wrapped in plastic and packed with shavings to retain moisture. It is best to plant as soon as possible. However if you cannot plant right away, you may store them in a sheltered location like a garage. If you don't have a permanent location for your tree or are not ready to plant it in the ground, you can plant it in a container, such as a 24" tree box, as a short-term solution.

PLANTING

Because BR fruit trees arrive without soil, they are very easy to handle and plant. Their planting holes need to be big enough to contain the roots, which should be spread out laterally and downward. Graft unions (the distinctive "knots" or "kinks" just above the roots of grafted trees should always remain above grade. We highly recommend using a mycorrhizal inoculant when planting as this will hasten root development and establishment. Soil amendments should not be applied until the roots take hold and the tree begins leafing out (2-3 months later). For a step by step guide, see page 2.

RECOMMENDED FOR TREE CARE

- GOPHER CAGE: Protects young roots from gopher damage. 15g size recommended.
- TREE STAKES: Helps stabilize tree in windy conditions and enables correct structural development.
- TREE TIES
- SOAKER RING: Ensures proper, and thorough soakings that moisten the entire depth of the root mass.
- MULCH: Helps conserve water and prevent weeds. Allow a 2-3" clearance from the trunk.
- MYCORRHIZA INOCULANT: Helps promote root growth in the first months of the trees development. Mix evenly into the back-fill soil as you make your mound.
- TREE PAINT: Prevents sunburn.
- SHOVELS

BARE ROOT FRUIT TREE CARE

1. DIGGING THE PLANTING HOLE

Dig a hole that is twice the diameter of the root spread. Dig a foot down, (more if using gopher cages) then backfill and tamp the soil in so that the flare (where the trunk meets the roots) will sit at or slightly above soil level with the roots spreading downward. Look for the "Nursery Line" which is a change in color at the base of the trunk and represents the level at which tree was originally planted

2. ADDING NUTRIENTS

Do not add any fertilizer at this stage. The trees will not need to be fed until later in the spring when foliage appears. However, we highly recommend using a Mycorrhiza inoculant to help promote root growth in the first months of the trees development. Mix evenly into the back-fill soil as you make your mound. You may also add Bonemeal for mineralization.

3. PLANTING YOUR TREE

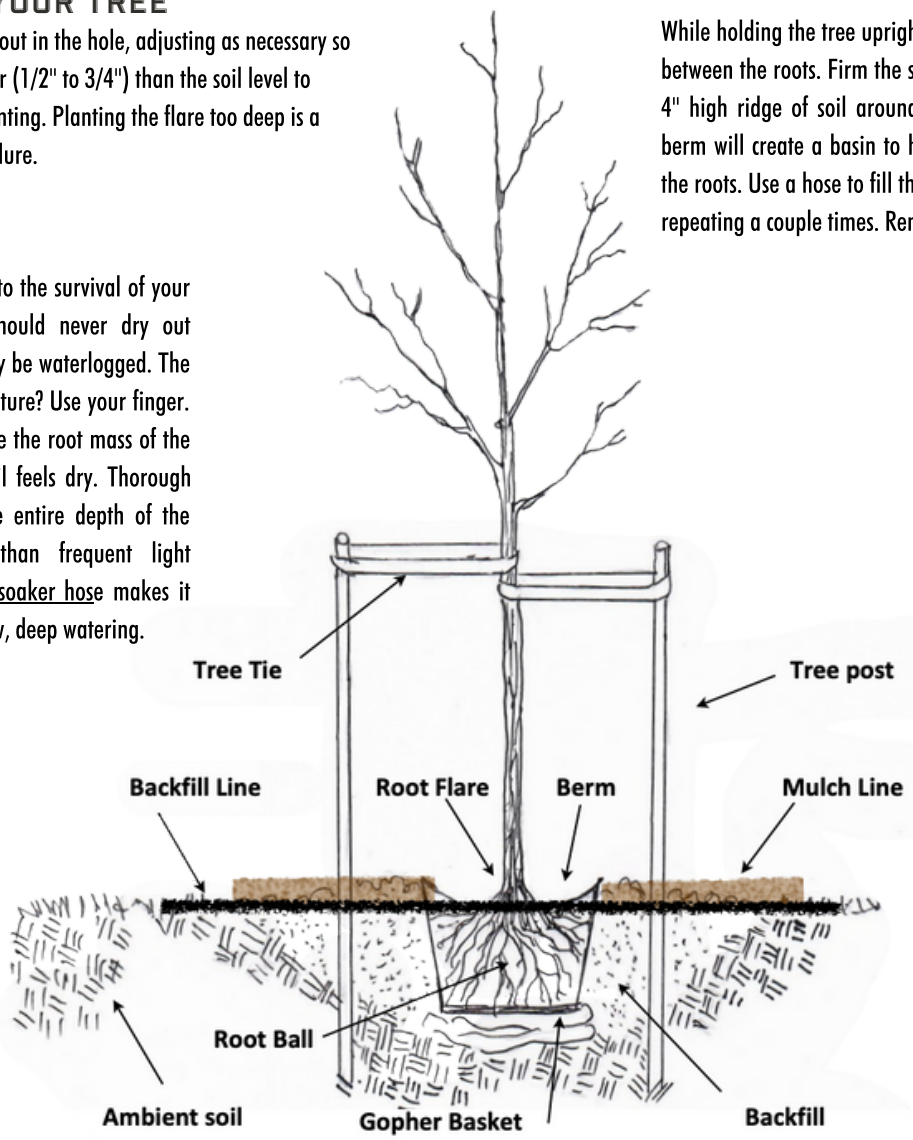
To plant, spread the roots out in the hole, adjusting as necessary so the flare sits slightly higher (1/2" to 3/4") than the soil level to allow for settling after planting. Planting the flare too deep is a common cause of plant failure.

4. BACKFILLING THE PLANTING HOLE

While holding the tree upright, backfill the hole, pressing soil around and between the roots. Firm the soil and eliminate air pockets. Construct a 3–4" high ridge of soil around the outer edge of the planting hole. This berm will create a basin to hold irrigation water and concentrate it over the roots. Use a hose to fill the basin, and then allow the water to soak in, repeating a couple times. Remove any plant tags or labels from the tree.

5. WATERING

Proper moisture is critical to the survival of your young tree. The roots should never dry out completely, nor should they be waterlogged. The best way to check soil moisture? Use your finger. Dig down 2–4" just outside the root mass of the plant and water if the soil feels dry. Thorough soakings that moisten the entire depth of the root mass are better than frequent light waterings. A ring-shaped soaker hose makes it easy to give plants this slow, deep watering.



(Top of gopher basket 1" above the soil line)

RECOMMENDED

Gopher Cages

We highly recommend using a gopher cage before you plant. This will protect the roots from gopher damage, especially if you are planting on an open hillside.

Staking

Bare root fruit tree roots are shallow initially, so staking your trees with tree posts will help stabilize them in windy conditions and also enable correct structure to develop as the trees grow.

Mulching

Mulching your trees helps conserve water and prevent weeds. It also assists with feeding your trees. Remember to allow a 2-3" clearance from the trunk.

COMMON QUESTIONS:

Where should I plant my tree?

Fruit trees need full sun (6-8 hour/day), so pick a nice sunny space. Most standard fruit trees can be planted 10 feet apart, but even closer if you prune back heavily in between seasons. We recommend intensive planting combined with good pruning.

Can I plant my tree in a container?

While they provide a great short term solution for the first 1-2 years of your tree, containers will constrict long term root growth and development of the tree. Using a 24" tree box for short term planting will allow proper root development.

What about pruning my tree?

Pruning should not be done in the first year. We encourage you to read up about pruning your trees before doing any pruning. Stone fruit trees do need specific pruning care in order to maximize fruit production.

Will I get fruit this year?

It depends on the tree - some apple and pear trees do produce the first year. However, your young tree is going to be putting almost all its energy in getting used to its new home.