City of Belmont

Your Tree Guide

How to select, plan and care for a tree



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Introduction

If you live in the City of Belmont, you can play an important role in achieving a clean, green and healthy City. You can use these guidelines to help plan your garden space, select the right plant types for your property, learn about care requirements and the best ways to plant a tree.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to access the City's free trees program you must be a City of Belmont resident.If you are renting, written permission must be obtained from the property owner.

To satisfy this criteria, you must bring proof of address when you collect your tree. Acceptable proof of address documents include a driver's license, utility bill or Opportunity Card.

Conditions

There is a limit of one tree per property. Trees provided by the City must be planted within your private property and not on the verge. Trees must be planted directly in the ground and not in pots or containers.

Futureproof Your Tree

Growing a tree is a slow process as many species take years, even decades, to reach their full size at maturity. Plan your tree planting with the future in mind as once planted it can be difficult to move.

It is important to consider if any development is scheduled to occur on your property in the future and how the placement of a tree might impact this.

Choosing a Location

It is important to think about shade and orientation when selecting a location. When placed in the right location and with sufficient room to grow, a tree can help cool your home, protect your garden from strong winds and provide a barrier to unwanted views and noise.

Planning for Wind and Sun

Planting to the North

Provides shade to your home in summer months

Planting to the West

Provides shade from the hot afternoon sun in summer

Helps shelter your home and garden from storms in winter



Planting to the East

Provides shade from the morning sun in summer

Helps shelter your garden from hot, dry easterly winds

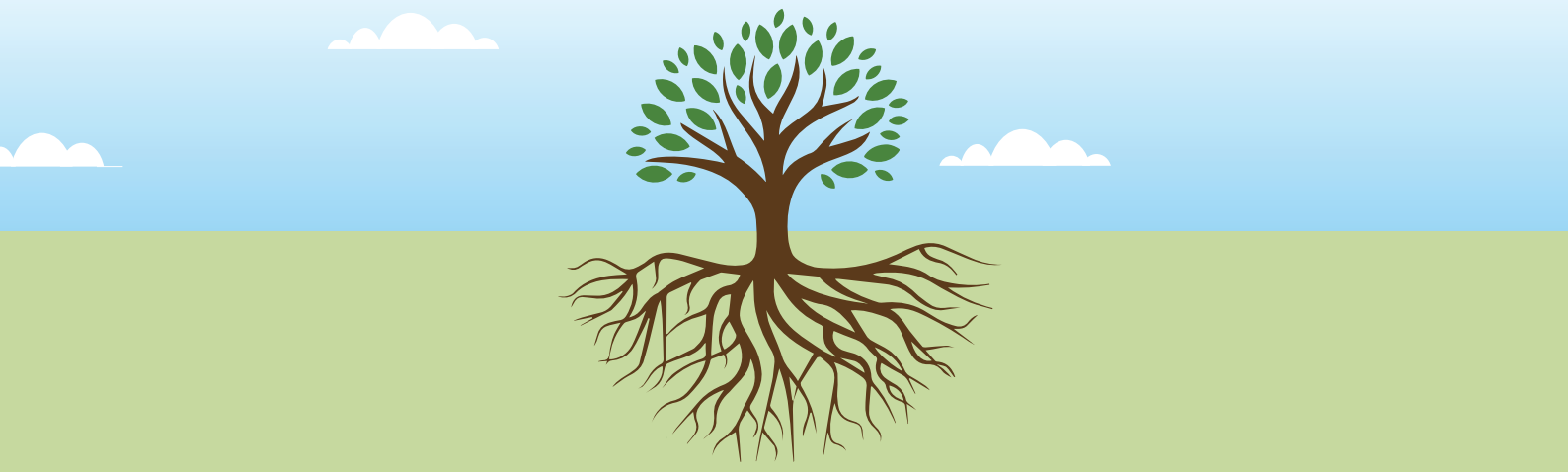
Planting to the South

Shelters trees that need some protection from the sun as your home will shade the plant

Think of your Neighbours

Trees grown in your garden may have an impact on your neighbours. When choosing a location to plant your tree, consider the following questions:

- Will your tree reduce sunlight to your neighbour's home, garden or solar panels?
- Will your tree block any cooling breezes?
- Will your tree's roots cause damage to fencing, paving or other infrastructure?
- Will your tree shed any debris into your neighbour's property?



Consider the Distance

The root system of your tree will be at least as wide as the canopy. When choosing your tree and location make sure you have an appropriate space that is far enough away from the following locations:

Underground Utilities	Locate your underground pipes to ensure your chosen location is free of any underground utilities. The City recommends contacting the free Before You Dig service via byda.com.au to obtain information about the underground infrastructure at your property.
Overhead Utilities	Look overhead and make sure that there are no powerlines or other overhead utilities. Tall trees near powerlines may require pruning to maintain a safe distance. Visit Western Power's website on managing clearance zones near powerlines: westernpower.com.au/safety/safety-at-home/make-the-safe-call/managing-trees-near-powerlines
Fences	Plant your tree far enough from fences so that it won't hang over the side or extend its roots under the fence.
Buildings and Walls	Trees planted too close to buildings and walls may require pruning to prevent damage.
Paving, Driveways and other Hard Surfaces	Planting near these locations may cause trees to grow under the pavement and driveways and may result in uplifting. It is best to plant 1.5m away from a driveway or hard surface area.
Swimming Pools	Tree roots grow towards water sources. Cracks and leaks in pools and pipes may attract tree roots. If you have a swimming pool, consider the size and frequency of the leaves dropped by your tree of choice as these may create additional pool maintenance.
Other Trees and Vegetation	Most trees will grow fine in groups with other trees. Grouped trees of different heights allow room for canopy growth. Trees that share a similar height can cause damage to each other when planted in close proximity.

Planting Your Tree

When to Plant

Autumn and Winter are the best times to plant new trees as it allows your tree to establish itself during favourable weather conditions.

The tree provided to you by the City can be planted immediately. Do not let it grow in a container as this can cause the root system to curl into itself, reducing the chance of it becoming established in the garden.

Digging a Hole

Before digging your hole, make sure that no underground utilities are in the location you have chosen.

The City recommends contacting the free Before You Dig service via byda.com.au to obtain information about the underground infrastructure at your property.

Dig a shallow, broad planting hole that is approximately two to three times wider than the root ball and only slightly deeper.

Soil Improvements

Trees grown in nurseries have perfectly controlled growing environments. As a result, many nursery trees will exhibit 'transplant shock' when being planted in Perth's poorer soil. Improving the soil before planting your tree will help reduce the severity of transplant shock and promote faster recovery and establishment.

The type of soil improvement required will depend on the needs of your tree. Mix your improvers into the soil at the bottom of the hole and any soil dug out of the hole that will be used to backfill the space around your tree.

WA Native Species

Most species native to Western Australia will only need a little bit of soil improvement as they are well adapted to growing in our poor soils.

Many of the native plants from other parts of Australia will have similar requirements.

Clay	✔ Helps improve the water-holding capacity of the soil
Slow-release natives pecific fertiliser	✔ Provides important nutrients and required trace elements
Compost	✔ Increases microbial diversity of the soil
Manure	✖ Generally disliked and can kill native plants

Banksias, Grevilleas and Hakeas

Trees that are a part of the Proteaceae family have specialised root structures which absorb trace elements of phosphorus extremely efficiently. Fertilisers that contain medium to high levels of phosphorus can often kill or severely harm these plants.

Fertilisers to avoid	Fertilisers to use
✖ NPK fertilisers	✔ Seaweed fertilisers
✖ Chemical fertilisers >2% phosphorus	✔ Chemical fertilisers designed for natives

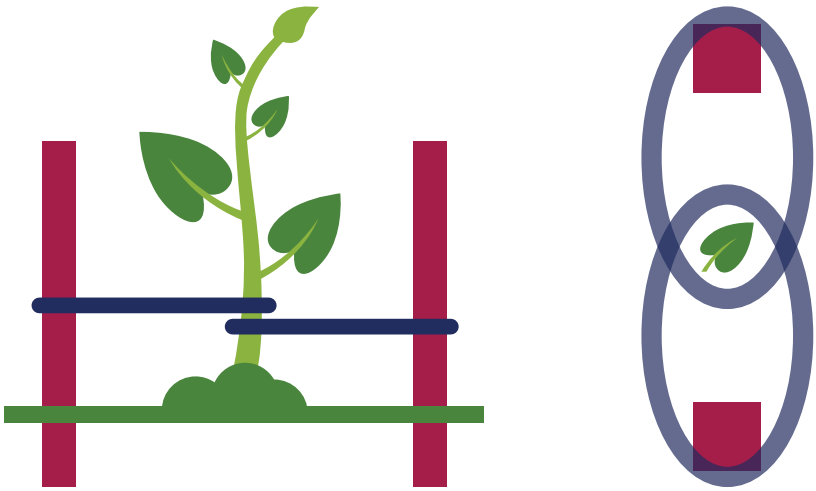
Planting Steps

1. Water your tree	Thoroughly water your tree and allow it to drain. Squeeze the sides of the pot to loosen the root ball, then gently slide the tree out of the pot while supporting the top of the root ball with your hand. Do not pull the tree out of the pot by its trunk.
2. Check the roots	Inspect the root ball for any circling roots. Gently loosen and try to straighten any roots that are circling.
3. Place your tree in the hole	Place your tree in the hole ensuring the top of the root ball is slightly below ground level. Most roots will develop within the top 30cm of soil. New roots will have difficulty developing if planted too deep due to a lack of oxygen. When placing your tree in the hole make sure to lift it by the root ball and not by its trunk.
4. Straighten your tree	Before filling your hole, check from several angles to confirm that your tree is straight. It can be difficult to reposition a tree once planted.
5. Fill the hole	Gently but firmly pack some soil around the base of the root ball to stabilise it. Carefully cut and remove any fabric, plastic, string or wire from around the trunk and root ball. Fill the remainder of the hole using a mix of soil and improvers (depending on your tree) and firmly pack the soil to eliminate air pockets. Periodically water the area with a seaweed solution and soil wetter to further reduce air pockets while backfilling. Only fill the hole to the level of the root ball and not the ground level. The slight depression it sits in will help capture water.
6. Mulch the base	Mulch around the base of a tree helps moderate soil temperature, maintain moisture and reduce grass and weed intrusions. Apply a 5cm to 10cm layer of mulch around the base of your tree. Keep the mulch 5cm away from the tree's trunk to prevent the bark from rotting. Mulched tree prunings are the best kind to use and can often be obtained for free.

Staking Your Tree

You should only stake your tree if necessary, as wind will encourage your tree to develop stronger roots. Young trees should remain staked until they can stand freely on their own.

Use one or two stakes with a wide, flexible tie material on the lower half of the tree as this will allow for movement. A loose 'figure 8' pattern can also be used to gently hold the tree upright.



Care and Watering

The goal when establishing a new tree is to encourage a root plate that helps the tree survive hot and dry periods.

Water your tree once or twice a week during hot and dry periods, ensuring that a wider area is watered to encourage roots to grow out. During autumn and winter your tree may not need watering as frequently. As your tree grows and spreads its roots, water around the edge of the tree's canopy where the absorbing roots are located.

Your tree can take anywhere from one to three years to become fully established. New growth such as fresh foliage and new stems will start to appear on established trees. Once your tree reaches this stage it will require little to no watering.

Pruning

Prune sparingly after planting, only removing minor branches which may have been damaged during the planting process. Removing branches during its early years may slow down the tree's growth.

If you wish to perform corrective pruning to adjust the shape of your tree it is best to wait for at least two years. To discourage branches which may need to be removed in the future, trim 1cm from the end of the branch to slow the growth of that branch. Do not remove too many branches in one go.

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