

How to Plant Shrubs

Learn how to plant a shrub.

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Planting one of our container-grown shrubs is fast and easy! Here's the best way to do it.

Time required: 30-60 minutes, plus watering

Materials: a Proven Winners ColorChoice shrub, a shovel, a hose, mulch.

Choose a site appropriate for the plant you've purchased:

Light: Check the black bar on the front of our tags for the icon(s) indicating the plant's light needs: full sun means at least six hours of bright, uninterrupted light, partial sun/partial shade means 3-6 hours of sun or filtered sun throughout the day, and shade is little to no sun at all.

Soil: most shrubs are adaptable to a wide variety of soils as long as the soil is well drained. Clay soils and rocky soils are more likely to have drainage problems than sandy or loamy soils. To test the drainage where you'd like to plant, dig a hole following the instructions below and fill it with water. Return to the hole in two hours: If there's no standing water, your soil is well drained. If water still remains, this indicates poor drainage and only shrubs that tolerate wet soil, such as **Little Henry**® *Itea*, **Sugar Shack**™ buttonbush, summersweet, and dogwood are suitable for planting there.

Once you've got the right place for the shrub you've chosen, it's planting time.

Prepare the site:

1. Rake away any leaf litter or existing mulch from the area you're going to be planting.
2. Dig a hole twice as wide and just as deep as the container. As you dig, pile the soil around the perimeter of the hole in at least two different areas. This makes it easier to backfill your shrub.

after planting. See photo at right.

3. When the hole looks about right, use the shovel handle to gauge the depth of the hole and compare it to the depth of the container, as shown here:



4. Once they seem similar in depth, remove the shrub from its container by knocking briskly around the pot sides and bottom to loosen it, and carefully slide the plant out. Do not pull or yank on the stem(s). Alternatively, the pot can be cut away from the rootball with a pair of hand pruners.



Plant your shrub:

1. Place the plant in the hole to check the depth. The top of the rootball should be even with or slightly above the soil surface. If it is too high, remove the plant and excavate a bit more. If it is too low, push in some soil from around the hole. Check again and repeat if necessary to achieve proper depth.
2. Place plant in hole and step back. Does its best side face the direction from which the shrub will usually be viewed? Rotate the plant in the hole until you are happy with how it looks.
3. Once you've decided on the most attractive side of your plant, *use your hands to "rough up" the root ball a bit*. The idea is to free them from the tight shape that the container has molded them into. Unwind any large, woody roots, and gently loosen the small roots away from the soil. This helps the plant become established more easily and quickly, so don't forget this important step.
4. Backfill using only the soil you excavated. As you backfill, firm the soil lightly around the roots to eliminate air pockets, continuing until you reach the top of the root ball, which should be covered with about $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.27 cm) of soil.

Important: We do not recommend adding anything to the hole or amending the soil when you plant. Peat moss, compost, garden soil, potting mix and other products can cause drainage problems that make it difficult for your shrub to get established.

Water and Mulch:

1. Water your new shrub, making sure to thoroughly saturate the rootball and the surrounding soil. The best way to do this is to set your hose on a very low flow and leave it on for an hour or two. Apply the water at the edge of the rootball, and move the hose to different points around the plant a few times during this period.



2. Most shrubs benefit from a 2-3" (5-7.6 cm) thick layer of shredded bark mulch applied over the entire root zone of the plant. This helps keep roots cool and conserves water, minimizing stress on your new plant and encouraging rapid development root development.

3. Keep your new shrub well watered – it should not be allowed to dry out completely during its first season. In the coming months, the plant will mostly devote its energy to growing roots, so you may not see a lot of growth on top. Typically, shrubs begin to grow vigorously in their second season; growth and flowering increase every season as long as conditions remain favorable.

Your small investment in time and money will yield big dividends in the coming years. So pat yourself on the back, get yourself a cold drink, and enjoy – you've earned it!

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