



WEASDALE NURSERIES LTD
Newbiggin on Lune, KIRKBY STEPHEN
Cumbria CA17 4LX 015396 23246

PLANT HANDLING NOTES & PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS

1.0 RECEIPT OF PLANTS

1.1 HOW MANY PARCELS SHOULD I HAVE?

Confirm from a) the buff address labels and b) the carrier's consignment note, how many parcels were despatched from the Nurseries, and check that they have all been received.

1.2 WHAT HAVE I BEEN SENT?

Open up the packages carefully and check off the contents against the delivery note - this is contained in the self-adhesive plastic envelope attached to the outside of one of the packages. If say, 2 or 3 specimens of one plant have been ordered, please examine those present carefully, as they will have been bundled together and may, at first glance, appear to be just a single plant. It is a very, very rare occasion that a "missing" plant is truly not there, thanks to our methods of cross-checking during the lifting and packing sequences.

1.3 IS EVERYTHING OK?

Should there be any shortages or transit damage, please notify us within 3 days of receipt of the consignment.

1.4 I CAN'T PLANT NOW BECAUSE.....

If you are unable to start planting right away (always the preferred option), leave your plants in their original wrapping in a cool out-building somewhere; choose a place that will be frost-free, out of any drying winds or sunlight and as rodent-proof as is possible - mice, voles or rats will very quickly sniff out any nice juicy roots to chew. Keep the root-wrapping nice and moist, never allowing the roots to dry out. In this manner, the plants will happily keep for 7-10 days; keep the root-wrapping nice and moist, never allowing the roots to dry out.

1.5 I *STILL* CAN'T PLANT NOW BECAUSE.....

If you have ordered many more plants than can be planted within a few days, or if planting is delayed for more than the 7-10 days in which the plants can stay in their wrapping, then "heel-in" the plants into a trench. This involves digging a short trench 10 -12" (25-30cm) deep (taking care to remove to one side the top crust of frosty soil), sitting the plants in against one of the trench sides with the stems just a few inches apart, and covering the roots with soil, treading down firmly to keep out frost and vermin and to ensure that the roots are in full contact with the soil, with no obvious air pockets. Heeled in like this, plants will be kept in good condition for many weeks.

2.0 GROUND PREPARATION

2.1 TO FEED OR NOT TO FEED?

Try and focus any ground preparation works upon improving the actual soil structure in preference to trying to feed the plants. Our plants are slow-grown in an upland soil that is not especially rich in nutrients and so will benefit from being planted in virtually any other soil type than our own! Over-feeding with fertilisers can kill plants as readily as failing to water them. Any feed given is best applied as a top-dressing which can then be gradually leached through to the root-zone over a period of time. Limit any "in-hole" feeding to either a handful of bonemeal or, even better, use some of the 'Agroblen' slow-release fertiliser tablets that you'll find in our catalogue. These gently leach out the stored nutrients over two seasons without upsetting the soil's natural balance. **DO NOT PUT ANY COMPOST OR MANURE INTO THE PLANTING HOLE OF ANY CONIFERS.**

2.2 SOIL IMPROVEMENT

With the exception of the wish to grow species which thrive in particularly unusual soil types, the best soil to have is a near-neutral good deep loam. Few of us ever have that and so we are left to improve what we *do* have. Those with clay soils know only too well how the water just sits on top and how slow it is to warm up in the Spring; those with dry, sandy soils despair at the way water just disappears without trace! Increase the humus content of either soil type by the digging or rotavating in of well-composted leaf-litter or garden compost (it can be judged to be "well-composted" when it has lost any offensive smell and just smells "earthy"). Year-by-year, your patient work will be rewarded as the soil structure changes by degrees.

3.0 PLANTING (further notes appear towards the rear of our catalogue)

3.1 GOLDEN RULES

a) **Don't dig your holes for planting before receiving your plants** - you won't know how big to make them and the weather may close in, fill them with water (which may freeze) and, in so doing, ruin the soil structure.

b) Don't plant in frosty weather - the roots may freeze in the cold air, roots of adjoining plants may be torn when parting frozen soil and the same frozen soil will not tread in well around the roots.

c) Don't let the plants dry out at any stage; keep them in a bag with some of the moss from the packaging and thus away from any drying wind or sunshine. If you need to remove them to check on the size of the planting hole(s), put them straight back in after checking.

d) Remember that the most critical time for watering is during the period between the swelling of the buds and the hardening-off of the new foliage. Once supporting a full head of leaves, some warning will be given of drought-stress.

3.2 THE HOLE

The soil in most of our nursery beds is rarely more than 12" (30cm) deep over a nigh-impenetrable boulder-clay base and so you can be assured that you will not need to dig a bomb-crater sized hole for your new tree! Give it around 6" (15cm) of free space beyond the laid out roots and about half that beneath, the total depth being decided by the "tide" line on the stem (just above the highest emerging root) which shows at what depth the tree had been planted in the nursery and which should be at the finished soil level again after planting. Fork-over the newly removed soil until it has a nice, friable consistency, such that will allow it to be sprinkled in around the roots when planting. For those working in a clay, or compacted soil, work at the vertical sides of the hole with a fork to give the roots a "lead-in" to the surrounding earth when they grow out that far; a smooth, firm, spade-polished edge to the hole could deflect roots much as would a plastic pot, and lead to girdling and subsequent poor stability of the mature tree. At the same time, if working in a clay soil, be mindful of the fact that a pit / hole like this can act like a sump and collect water which will then be unable to drain away. The problem is exacerbated by the use of soil or a tree-planting compost that is of a different (lower) density from that of the surrounding soil, allowing the tree to sit in stagnant water that will lead ultimately to root death. If this situation is likely to arise, then dig a drainage channel away to a point in the garden that is below the base of your new hole; line the bottom of it with all those stones that you have carefully picked out of your 'beds, and then backfill once more.

3.3 STAKING

If staking, the stake should be placed in the hole so as to be on the windward side (ie on the side **from** which the wind normally blows) of the tree and driven in to the base of the hole. If done after planting, there is a very real danger of the stake being driven through the roots, thus damaging them and leaving a site through which disease can enter the tree. Double check the position of the stake now, making sure that it will present itself to the tree in the right place to allow a tie to fasten.

3.4 BACKFILLING

Put a few forkfuls of soil into the hole to make a small, conical mound, onto which you can then place the tree, taking care to spread the roots around. Prune back any torn or damaged roots to sound wood, with sharp secateurs. If available, a handful of bonemeal can be scattered in the base of the hole at this stage and any 'Agroblen' slow-release fertiliser tablets added. Continue back filling with soil, periodically jiggling the trunk up and down in a vertical plane to work the soil particles in amongst the individual root fibres. Keep a constant eye on the trunk "tide" line to make sure that the finished planting depth is going to correspond with the ground level.

When the roots are properly covered with soil by a few inches (sorry, Centimetres), start treading down the soil quite firmly. If you have an old, favourite, pair of wellingtons, the soles of these will be much kinder to the bark on the roots than will a pair of "Commando" soles, but, either way, make sure that the roots do not become exposed to your boots and add more soil if this is the case. Once the soil is firmed, add some more and repeat the above operation until all of the soil is in the hole and the tree quite stable. If you have been keeping a good eye on the position of the tree, the tree tie(s) can now be fastened in place.

3.5 TREE-TIES

The tree-ties that we supply are simple, safe and strong, they are tightened by means of a buckle and additional security is gained by nailing the tie to the stake through the tie. What looks like a belt-loop that comes with the tie is, in fact, a distance piece that is designed to allow some stand-off between the stake and tree and thus prevent chafing of the bark. When correctly installed, the tree-tie should describe a figure-of-eight when viewed from above, with the distance piece circling the "waist" of the '8', one loop encircling the tree, the other, the stake.

4.0 WATERING

4.1 AT PLANTING

Once planted, water-in well; 2-3 gallons should be adequate for most trees. This helps replace moisture lost during planting but, more importantly, it helps to bring about intimate contact of the roots with the surrounding soil.

4.2 LATER.....

The most critical period for a newly planted tree is Spring, from the point where the buds are just about to break. If enough water is not available to the tree at this point, the buds may fail to break at all or, having done so, may break (sometimes referred to as the "flush") and then fail to grow, the leaves just withering and dying. Keep an eye on the progress of Spring in your own locality and be prepared to water your trees again if the soil is too dry (dig with your bare hands under the surface for an accurate assessment of moisture levels in the root-zone). Once Summer is properly underway, the tree will be able to give the observant gardener a little more advanced warning if it is under stress

from drought, clues being the leaves in the top and upper branches becoming limp or, worse, browned and crispy.

4.3 MULCHING

This is well worth doing on a number of counts:

- * It minimises water loss from the soil through evaporation
- * It will prevent weed growth; weeds may be unsightly but, more importantly, they compete for the moisture and nutrients that the tree needs
- * In a very cold winter, it can keep damaging frost away from the root-zone

A 'mulch' can be one of many forms:

- * A purpose-made mat such as the Tubex Mulch-mat (see catalogue)
- * A square of old roofing felt / carpet / old woolly pullover
- * Covering of bark chippings / crushed cocoa shells / coir
- * Grass clippings over old newspapers (but not too thickly spread, as it is possible to create anaerobic conditions underneath, to the detriment of the root system)

5.0 AFTERCARE

5.1 STAKE & TIE

Periodically check the tie and loosen a little or re-adjust as necessary. Look for any signs of chafing and move the tie to a better position if necessary. There is a persuasive school of thought that advocates staking a tree quite low down (about 9-12" or 22-30cm above ground level) in order to feed the wind loads, and resulting upper stem movement, down to the roots, which will in turn respond by developing to resist the forces concerned. The best option is probably to adopt a compromise by letting the tree settle in for the first year with the full-sized stake and then in year two, cut the stake down by half and in year three, by half again, each time repositioning the tie as appropriate. In this manner, the soil will consolidate properly, the tree acclimatise itself to its new surroundings and, most importantly, the newly developing root hairs are not constantly being broken as the new tree moves excessively in the ground.

5.2 PRUNING

Keep the tree "tidy" by removing any broken, dead or diseased shoots or branches with a clean cut using sharp secateurs. Similarly, keep an eye out for any branches that are starting to cross one another; if this happens, they can chafe away the bark and allow in disease-causing pathogens or simply leave the tree looking unsightly. Stand back and take a careful look at the overall shape to decide which of two or more offending branches would be best removed to prevent further damage and yet retain the best form. Use either a pruning saw or secateurs depending upon the size of the branch and cut just next to the "collar", **don't** cut flush with the main, or adjoining stem, as in so doing, you will remove the special zone of plant tissue that is able to heal the wound. It is not necessary to apply a coat of protective paint - current findings point to the probability that just as many pathogens will be sealed **in** to the pruning site and held by the paint, as if by a poultice, to foster disease. Far better to take care to leave a smooth, clean, sloping cut that that will readily shed water. If unsure about any of these issues, either find a good book on the subject (available, of course, from Weasdale Nurseries!) or search out someone whose skills you can rely upon; your local authority's Tree, or Arboricultural, Officer is often a good person to start with.

5.3 MOVING A TREE

If, as happens from time to time, you decide that your tree really can't stay where it was first planted, then all is not necessarily lost. Within the nursery, our trees are transplanted every three years and so you can happily consider doing the same in your garden without any problems. Don't try and move it whilst it has any leaves on, but wait until **all** of the deciduous trees in your area have become dormant. Then, using a sharp spade, dig all around the outer edge of the roots and loosen the tree from underneath, taking great care not to tear any of the roots as you work the soil away from them. Once out of the ground, carefully inspect the roots for any accidental damage, trimming them as necessary. Now return to **3.0 - PLANTING** above and start all over again!

If the tree has been in the ground for much longer, please call us for more specific advice; you may need to perform the operation over three years or, if the budget will run to it, call in a specialist with a tree-spade (usually a lorry-mounted device) that will remove the tree and soil in one "ice-cream scoop" bite.

We hope that some, or all, of the above will be of help to you and will benefit your planting scheme but, as ever, please do not hesitate to call for any further advice.

October 2001

PLANTING INSTRUCTIONS – HEDGES

- Using strong twine between sturdy posts, mark out the line of the hedge to be planted, allowing sufficient space for the ultimate width / height of the fully-grown hedge.
- If working on a turfed area, lay down some polythene alongside the working area, onto which you can place the turfs & spoil and so keep the underlying lawn tidy.
- Remove the turfs along the hedge-line, working to the marker line to keep a nice, straight edge.

- Dig the planting trench along the same line, to the depth of your spade (ie around 10" or 25cm). Make sure that the long edge adjacent to your marker line is kept to a true vertical, as this will maintain the plants in a vertical plane once you start to plant. Put the spoil (the soil) onto the polythene (if used as suggested) along the edge of the trench.
- When the digging is finished, sprinkle a dusting of bonemeal into the base of the trench. **DO NOT PUT MANURE INTO THE TRENCH.** Keeping the plants in a bag by your side (to prevent them from drying out), start at one end of the trench and, placing the first plant against the vertical edge, hold it at the right height with one hand and, with a spade in the other hand, fold enough of the soil from the spoil-heap onto the roots to hold the plant in position. *NB The "right height" for the plant is where the soil level is just above the highest root on the stem.* Using a measuring stick cut to length to your chosen planting distance, place the next plant into position in the same way and, again, fold soil onto the roots to hold it.
- Once you reach the end, you can start back-filling your trench until about half-full. Making sure that none of the roots are exposed, tread them all in firmly with a wellington-booted foot (heavily cleated work-boots can be a little unsympathetic to the delicate roots). You can 'tease' and displaced plants back into line before continuing, and then complete the back filling of the trench, treading in as you go. If there are turfs to replace, put these back in upside-down, as this will help keep down any competing weeds.
- Water-in well to help consolidate the soil around the roots.
- Stand back and admire your handiwork!

NOTES:

- a) If your trench is in a heavy, clay soil, make sure that it can drain freely from its lowest point and that it will not act like a sump.
- b) DON'T put a whole load of manure / compost into the trench before planting as you will risk burning the roots; such materials are much better applied as a top-dressing after planting, to leach down gently later assisted by the rain, earthworms etc.
- c) Only trim a hedge lightly in its first season of growth, it being preferable to let it settle in for the first year. The only exception to this is Quickthorn, which responds well to cutting-back hard to around 3" (75mm) above ground-level in late March after planting (although many find this hard to do!).
- d) Water well in the first season, particularly when the plants first flush (ie when they come into leaf). Weeds and grasses all compete for vital moisture and should be kept under control along the hedge-line.