



### New Plant installation

When placing new plants in our landscapes either to replace or supplement the current plantings it is important to remember the proper way to make our newest acquisitions feel at home and flourish.

**1- Optimum planting times are usually early spring or early fall in our area.** At those times the days are shorter and the air temperatures are cooler and the soil usually more moist. When planting California natives the fall is the best time to plant to make use of the winter rains. Bare root plants are mostly available in late winter and thus planted at that time.

**2- Right plant right place:**

- Research your selected plant's growing needs. How much sunlight, water, soil type etc. your particular plant choice will need to thrive in its new home.
- Walk your landscape and pick the spot best suited to that particular plant's planting/location requirements. Making sure to check for and avoid any underground irrigation lines or other obstacles that might be compromised when digging a hole.

**3- Care until plant date:** When you have made your plant selection it is best to get the plant in the ground right away. If your newest addition's planting day is going to be delayed make sure to place it in a cool place.

**4- Hydrate:** Water your new plant regularly until you can get it in the ground. Keeping your plant hydrated will remove one stress factor from the planting process and, when you are ready to plant, a wet root ball is much easier to plant.

**5- Prepare the planting hole:** Once you have located the area in your landscape for your new plant it is time to prepare the hole for the new tenant. Dig the hole about  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch shallower than the depth of the pot. In other words make sure that, once in the ground, the plant will be just a little above the level of the surrounding soil. The width of the hole should be at least double the width of the pot. Scratch the sides of the hole to make it easier for the roots of the plant to spread out. If the soil in the hole is firm, loosen it but leave a firm base at the bottom of the hole to support the plant in the raised position mentioned above. Water the hole to wet the soil. If the soil is really compacted, wet the hole and allow the soil to set for a couple of days. Reserve any soil removed from the hole.

**6- Remove the plant from the pot correctly:** To remove plants from their pots, be gentle. Lay the potted plant on its side and, supporting the plant, roll and press lightly on the side of the pot to loosen the soil. Then, loosely supporting not grasping the entire plant, remove the plant from the pot. Never pull abruptly on the plant as this may break off foliage and damage it.

**7- Loosening the roots:** Sometimes the plants have been so long in their current containers that their roots have become crowded and bound tightly (called 'root bound'). If this is the case, once the plant is out of the pot, lightly massage and roll the root mass gently loosening and breaking up the clump of roots. The goal is to end up with a loose root ball that looks like long tresses of hair. Sometimes the roots are so tightly bound that they must be cut and dead roots removed. Using a sharp knife or a similar tool cut into the root mass about 2 inches deep, quartering the mass and remove any dead roots.

**8- Placing the plant in the hole:** Place the plant with its loosened roots into the prepared planting hole, draping the roots over a small mound of soil at the bottom of the hole. Make sure the plant is upright and facing in the desired direction. Remove any branches resting on the ground.

**9- Filling in the hole around the plant:** Use the reserved soil to backfill the area around the plant in stages a little at a time. Gently pat the soil down around the base of the plant, not compacting it (you do not want to remove any

pore space between the soil particles), at each addition until the hole around the new plant is filled in. Do not add any amendments or fertilizers at this time

**10- Build a moat:** Once the hole is filled in, use any remaining soil to build a berm about 8 inches from the base of the plant to create a temporary water basin. Make sure the plant is higher than the reservoir of the basin as any standing water around the base of the plant will cause problems. This water basin can be removed after a few months.

**11- Watering:** Water the newly installed plant gently and thoroughly immediately after planting. Until these new additions are established water frequently (every two or three days if warm). Once established; for the plants planted in the fall the cooler temps and rain will keep the plants hydrated adequately. If the plants are planted in the spring or during a dry fall the plants will need frequent watering. For the first few weeks every two to three days and taper off after a few weeks to twice a week watering until the rains come.

**12: Final steps:**

- You can add stakes at this time for support of trees or larger shrubs. Do not affix the plant tightly to this support and they will need to flex easily to grow properly.
- Mulch lightly around your new plants keeping the mulch at least six inches from the base of the plant to prevent root rot.

During the first season of your plant's installation keep an eye on the plants to look for signs of wilting and water as needed. Do not let plants dry out while they are getting established.

Once established, follow the plant's water needs recommendations as listed on the plant tag or from researched information.

**Notes:**

- Always start with healthy plants and soil
- All new plants need regular watering, even drought tolerant varieties, until established (usually 12 months)
- Do not overwater as over-irrigating is one of the chief causes of plant problems.
- Do not add fertilizers to new plants.
- Gopher problems-prepare site before planting with wire cages etc.

Information links:

UC Davis arboretum

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk1546/files/inline-files/All-StarsCareInstructions.pdf>

Grownative.com

<https://grownative.org/learn/native-garden-installation-toolkit/>

UCMG Marin County

<https://marinmg.ucanr.edu/CARE/PLANTING/>

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