1. Start with a quality grade tree as specified in the Florida Grades & Standards for Nursery Stock.

   - Select trees with a quality trunk form, branch arrangement and canopy uniformity.

2. Check for root system quality.
   - Field-grown (B&B) trees should be hardened-off or pre-dug at the nursery until new roots are visible through the burlap.
   - Trees should be solid in the root ball.
   - Top most structural root should emerge from the trunk in the top two inches of the root ball.

3. Tree shipping and unloading.
   - Trees should be protected during shipping by a tarp or shipped in an enclosed truck.
   - Trees should never be lifted by the trunk. Lift using root ball straps or container handles.
   - On the job site, store trees upright, in the shade, and irrigate twice daily with 5 gallons per caliper inch applied directly to the root ball until planting.
   - Do not store trees on asphalt.

   - Prepare the planting hole twice as wide as the root ball and slightly less than the depth of the root ball.
   - Dig the planting hole shallower in areas with wet soil conditions and backfill up to the edge of the root ball.
Tree preparation.
• Remove the black weed cloth liner, plastic wrap, or container.
• Remove any string, strapping, or wire wrapped around the trunk.
• Cut any circling roots prior to planting.

Tree planting.
• Place the tree in the center of the hole with the top most root in the root ball at or slightly higher than the finished landscape grade; in no case should the first root emerging from the trunk be more than 2 inches below the soil level.
• Check to ensure the tree is straight in the hole, and begin filling in with native field soil.
• Water in the backfill as you fill the planting hole, working the soil to ensure that no air pockets remain.

Finishing planting.
• At the edge of the root ball, make a soil berm 2-3 inches high to form a shallow water holding area. Water immediately after planting with 5 gallons of water per caliper inch.
• Apply a 4 inch layer of mulch to an area 2 feet in diameter per trunk caliper inch, but with no more than 1 inch of mulch on top of root ball.
• Do not pile mulch directly against the tree trunk.

Irrigation requirements for establishment.
• Use low volume drip irrigation for optimum growth & survival.
• If an automatic system is not used, a strict irrigation schedule is necessary for survival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Size: 2-4” caliper</th>
<th>Irrigation for vigor</th>
<th>Daily for 1 month; every other day for 3 months; weekly until established.</th>
<th>Irrigation for survival</th>
<th>Twice weekly for 3-4 months.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Tree Size: &gt;4” caliper</th>
<th>Irrigation for vigor</th>
<th>Daily for 6 weeks; every other day for 5 months; weekly until established.</th>
<th>Irrigation for survival</th>
<th>Twice weekly for 4-5 months.</th>
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</thead>
</table>

- At each irrigation, apply 3 gallons per inch trunk caliper to the root ball. For example, apply 9 gallons on a 3” caliper tree. Apply in a manner so all water soaks into the root ball.
- Establishment takes 3 to 4 months per inch trunk caliper. In drought conditions irrigate the following summer.

Important Planting Notes

- The best soil amendment for successful planting is water. Research has shown no benefit to using other soil amendments.
- Place no soil over the root ball at planting. Deep planting kills trees.

This tree grading cue card provided to you courtesy of Roots Plus Growers & The University of Florida IFAS Extension