

HOW TO PLANT A SHRUB

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REM-07012009-025

Did you properly plant your last shrub? The long term success of woody shrubs whether it is a viburnum or an ixora is linked to how well it was planted. Do you think you know how to plant a shrub? The instructions may be new to you!

While you can plant shrubs at any time of year here, now is not a bad time as the rains have returned which helps supplement irrigation needs. The first and easiest step to planting a shrub is to call underground utilities (800-432-4770) before you dig. Once this issue is cleared up, work up the soil where you want the shrubs to be planted. Shrubs are often planted in a designated bed and if this is the case, amend the soil as needed with organic matter.

Next, turn your attention to the root ball of the

shrub. Locate what is called the flare of the trunk where the main root meets the trunk. This must be visible. Make sure to remove any excess soil and circling roots that may be growing over the main roots with a hand pruner. The next step may seem a little rough, but using a sharp spade, hand pruning saw, etc., carefully shave off the outside of the root ball. This will eliminate circling roots which may end up girdling the trunk in the future. This shaving also enhances the root growth and eventual establishment.

Finally, the shrub is ready to be planted. The hole should be about three times the diameter of the root ball in width and shallow. Position the root ball in the planting hole so that the top of the ball is slightly above the soil line. In fact, an inch

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- ① *Roots of shrubs growing in containers are deflected by the sides and bottom of the container. This confinement results in a dense root system, which dries quickly after planting.*
- ② *Roots eventually grow out from the dimensions of the container into the surrounding landscape soil, extending well past the edge of the shrub foliage. Once roots are established in this fashion, shrubs are very tolerant of drought.*

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July 1, 2009

above the soil line is fine. Place soil back into the planting hole and pack it firmly around the root ball. While it may look a bit unfinished, it is essential that no soil should get on top of the root ball. Roots will quickly grow out into the surrounding soil.

At this point, the shrub is ready to mulch. Mulch provides many benefits including reducing the need for irrigation. Place two to three inches of organic mulch around the root ball, but not on top of the root ball. Mulch placed over the root ball will actually reduce the amount of water that gets into the roots. Water is your final task which should be applied according to watering restrictions and rain events. As a rule of thumb

for shrubs, a three-gallon shrub will require, at minimum, a gallon of water every four days. One gallon every two days will provide even more vigorous growth. Apply this water right on the root ball - this is where the roots are. Hand-watering or microirrigation can help accomplish this need. Monitor your rain gauge. If you receive a quarter of an inch or more of rain over a 24-hour period, do not give additional irrigation. Once the shrubs are established, in about 20-28 weeks, rainfall is all that is needed. If we get into very droughty conditions, occasional watering may be needed if you see any wilting.

Taking the time to plant a shrub correctly saves time, money and future frustration.

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Turner, at 764.4351 or email Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com. Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

*contact a
MASTER GARDENER
on the Plant Lifeline from 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 764.4340 or by email Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com.*

*You can also visit them at one of our many Plant Clinics around the county:
<http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/PlantClinics.pdf>*

Resources:

- Gilman, E.F., Shober, A.L., Moore, K.A., Wiese, C., Paz, M. & Scheiber, S.M. (2009) *Planting Shrubs in Florida Landscapes*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.
- Gilman, E.F., Shober, A.L., Moore, K.A., Wiese, C., Paz, M. & Scheiber, S.M. (2009) *Establishing Shrubs in Florida Landscapes*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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