

Thank you for supporting Tucson's urban forest! Trees for Tucson is excited to help you add shade trees to your landscape.

We want to share an important note about planting during the hottest part of the year. In the Sonoran Desert, the weeks leading up to the summer monsoon are the most challenging time to establish a new tree. Prolonged temperatures over 100°F, intense sun, hot soils, and low humidity place significant stress on newly planted trees before their roots have had time to grow into the surrounding soil.

While many trees do establish successfully they require extra attention and consistent care. If you choose to plant now, following these best practices will give your tree the greatest chance of success:

 **Avoid leaving your tree in its nursery pot in the sun** - store your tree in the shade. Trees heat up quickly in black plastic containers and can become root stressed.

 **Water the root ball before planting.** Give the tree a thorough watering while it is still in its container so the root ball is fully moist before planting.

 **Plant during the evening if possible.** Early evening is best so the tree can recover overnight. Avoid planting during the afternoon heat.

 **Plant correctly.** Dig a hole two to three times wider than the root ball, but no deeper. The top of the root ball should sit level with, or slightly above, the surrounding soil. Always un-circle and flare-out any circling roots.

 **Do not amend the soil.** Backfill with the native soil you removed from the hole. Native desert trees establish best when planted directly into native soil

 **Water deeply and consistently.** Newly planted trees need regular deep watering. The goal is to keep the root ball moist while encouraging roots to grow outward into the surrounding soil. Deep watering encourages roots to grow downward where soil stays cooler and moisture lasts longer. Check the soil frequently—it should feel moist several inches below the surface, but not waterlogged. During periods of extreme heat, trees may need supplemental watering even if monsoon rains arrive. Water in the evening to cut down on evaporation!

 **Apply mulch.** Spread 2–4 inches of wood-chip mulch over the planting area, keeping it an inch or so away from the trunk. Mulch helps keep soil cooler, reduces evaporation, and improves soil health over time.

 **Expect some stress.** It is normal for a newly planted tree to lose some leaves or appear wilted during extreme heat. This does not necessarily mean the tree is dying. Continue watering appropriately and avoid overreacting with excessive watering.

 **Avoid pruning or fertilizing.** Allow the tree to focus its energy on establishing roots during its first growing season.

 **Provide temporary shade if possible.** Shade cloth or another temporary shade source on the west side of the tree during the first few weeks can reduce heat stress, especially during extreme heat events.

 **Patience is key.** Some native desert trees slow their growth or shed leaves during extreme heat and drought. This is often a survival strategy rather than a sign of poor health. Desert trees often spend their first year establishing roots before putting on significant top growth. With proper planting and consistent watering, your tree will reward you with decades of shade, beauty, wildlife habitat, and cooler outdoor spaces.