

Planting a Shrub

1. Digging a Hole for the Shrub

We want a hole this deep, just the height it grew at the nursery, and twice as wide as the root ball. The first maneuver is to slice the sod around the plant. We will set the plant aside. Always handle the plant by its container. If you grab the plant and pull up you stress the connection between the plant and its roots, whereas if you pick it up by the burlap you are cradling it as you lift it.

Now just take a thin undercut of that sod, and lift it like a scalp and deposit it in the wheelbarrow. We are cutting off the roots just below the soil surface. You like to have a professional looking job, so plunge the shovel in vertical. So you get a nice clean wall on the edge of the hole.

2. Placing Shrub in the Ground

So we now have our hole excavated to the depth of the root ball and twice the diameter. All the soil taken out of the hole is in the wheelbarrow, neat and tidy -- and that we blend with the shovel just to get it into a fine, easily dispersed consistency.

With the plant in the hole, the burlap is untied or cut away then rolled down as far on the sides of the root ball as is practical without disturbing the roots. You want to maintain the integrity of the root ball. And then we are ready to start backfilling the hole.

3. Covering the Shrub with Soil

So that first batch of soil we installed we can rake around, and get the hole half filled. At this point the plant gets a complete saturation. What we want to do is avoid any air pockets in the soil. We want to make sure we have excellent soil condition -- uniform consistency, not aerated -- all around the plant.

4. Watering the Shrub

Our final task is to take the loose garden soil and fill in all around. What we want to do is create a little moat around the plant so that its later watering can be done easily. Rather than dump this whole pail in at once, you want to take it slow, a little bit at a time, and keep coming until you get to the point where things might overflow.



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