

Shrubs are the ideal solution to many landscaping needs. But carefully consider their needs--sun or shade, wet or dry soil, pruning requirements, winter protection, and the like.

After you pick a site that's suitable, you're ready to plant. Set shrubs out in either spring or fall.

Bare-root shrubs

Make the planting hole slightly larger than the root area for bare-root shrubs. Keep roots moist until you're ready to set the plant in the ground. Place the shovel handle across the hole to help determine when the plant is at the proper depth. It should be a little deeper than it grew before being moved.

Backfill the hole halfway with the soil, then tamp it lightly around the roots. Fill the planting hole with water. Let the water soak in and then refill the hole with soil.

Balled-and-burlapped or container-grown

Although they are more expensive than bare-root plants, balled-and-burlapped and container-grown shrubs--particularly evergreens--are less disturbed by planting and thus start growing much faster.

Make the width of the hole a foot wider than the ball and about as deep. Loosen tight soil at the bottom of the hole. Then grasp the ball and carefully lower the plant into the hole. Center the plant and tuck soil under the ball if needed to straighten the plant. Loosen burlap only at the trunk. The burlap will decay rapidly and will not interfere with root development. If the rootball is wrapped in plastic or in an asphalt or cardboard container, carefully cut away the covering after the shrub is positioned in the hole. The staff at the nursery or garden center can help you make slits in a metal container. Remove the metal container before positioning the plant in the hole. Backfill the hole as for bare-root shrubs.

New shrub care

Leave a shallow depression around the trunk to catch water in months ahead. Give the newly planted shrub a thorough soaking with a hose. Water deeply again in a couple of days.

Trim the plant back to a quarter of its original height if it is to be sheared, half if informal. Shear evergreens enough to make them uniform. Add mulch around the base to within an inch or two of the trunk.