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## Tree Planting and Selection

Selecting a new tree is a fun event often including the family at home or a committee in the case of a commercial site. Everyone is eager to give input.

The tree selection process should begin at the new tree's proposed location. Stand where the tree is to be placed. How much space is there and how large do you envision the mature tree to be? Look up – are there utility wires that could get entangled in the tree branches? How about the drainage in this spot? If you are unsure – it is fairly easy to determine how the water will percolate in the desired location. Dig a 1 foot deep hole and fill with water. If the soil is real dry, refill the hole with water again. With the outer soil moist and the hole refilled with water, record how fast the water drains. A rate of 0.1 inch of drain per hour is very slow and 5 inches is fast.

The best place to go tree shopping is at a garden center ([www.gardencentersofcolorado.org](http://www.gardencentersofcolorado.org)). Armed with the knowledge of how much space the tree has to grow and how fast your soil drains, the staff at the garden center will show you trees that fit these criteria. Early spring flowering, seeds, fruits and fall coloration may be important. Ask about issues with insects and diseases specific to the tree in mind.

Most nursery stock is sold as ball and burlap. This means the tree was dug from the growing nursery (field) and the resulting root ball is tied in twine, burlap, and a wire basket. This hardware holds the roots and soil together, but requires special handling at planting time.

It is best to begin with a damp root ball. If the root ball is dry to the touch, water thoroughly the day before you plant. This will help the root ball stay together while planting. Place the tree in the hole so that the top of the root ball is at or just above ground level. Trees and shrubs should be planted with at least the top two rungs of the wire basket removed. All the burlap and twine should be removed.

Backfill the hole about three-quarters full with soil and slowly add water while filling the hole. Make sure the top of the soil slopes away from the trunk of the tree. Erect a dam around the outside of the hole with soil. Fill the depression inside the dam with water and allow it to seep in thoroughly. Add two to three inches of mulch over the ball, but not all of the way up to the trunk.

Remember to stake the tree. The ties should hold the tree from falling over but should not be a "death grip". Be mindful that as the tree grows the supports may be too tight and adjust as needed. The staking can be removed in a year or two following planting.