

Shrub Planting Guide & Illustration

Proper planting techniques will help your plants get the best start possible. There are several steps that go into planting. Generally speaking, following these steps will help your plants establish quicker, have a stronger root system, and allow for greater longevity of your plant.

Let's assume the following:

- You already know what plants you want.
- You know where your new plants will be planted.
- You are planting plants from a standard nursery pot (not bare root or balled-and-burlapped)

Step 1: Dig the Hole.

Typically, the hole should be 2 to 3 times the width of the nursery container. This will allow for nutritious amended soil to be backfilled which encourages roots to expand outward after planting. This is a crucial to the establishing process.

To achieve the right hole depth, place the plant (still in the container) in the hole. The top of the root ball (soil level inside the container) should sit slightly above the surrounding grade. This is imperative to plant health. If the plant is planted too low, water may sit at the base causing root rot. Too high, and roots may be exposed which could also cause harm to the plant.

Step 2: Remove the Plant and Assess.

Now that the hole is dug to the proper depth and width, remove the plant from the nursery container. Never beat or punch the sides of the container to remove the plant. Doing so may disturb the root ball too much, thus harming the plant and in some cases may cause plant death. If the plant is tight in the can, gently squeeze the sides of the can and/or carefully turn the plant upside-down holding the root ball with one hand making sure it stays together.

Now that the plant is out, assess the root ball. If the roots appear overly dense and/or growing in a circular pattern, it's necessary to tease the roots slightly and even scratch the side of the root ball to break up the circular root growth. In some cases where the root system is severely root-bound, use pruning clippers or a knife to score the sides vertically. It may also be necessary to remove a large root massing at the bottom of the root ball. This will encourage new healthy root growth.

Step 3: Setting the Plant.

Once the root ball has been assessed, set it in the hole. Verify that the top of the root ball is sitting slightly above the surrounding soil grade. Make and adjustments to the hold depth by removing more soil or adding. Again, if the plant is planted too low, it allows water to sit at the base which can cause root rot. This is a simple but crucial step for plant health.

Step 4: Soil Amendment.

In many cases, the natural soil in any given yard may not have the best composition or may be leached of nutrients. Generally speaking, it's helpful for the plant to add soil amendment when planting. Soil amendment should be mixed about 50% with the natural soil that was removed from the planting hole. Please note that this is a generalization when it comes to planting. Some soil may not require any soil amendment, and some may require a lot. It depends on existing soil

type, plant selection, and other factors. Most plants do not like heavy clay soil and amending is crucial. Sandy soils will also need amending, generally speaking, to reintroduce nutrients back in to the soil. We encourage to do extended research on each plant being planted so as to give it exactly what is needed to best thrive in your space.

When the soil amendment is mixed in with the natural soil, you can begin backfilling around your plant. When the soil is backfilled about halfway, water the plant. This alleviates air pockets and helps the soil around the plant compress somewhat.

Now backfill the rest of the soil mix. Slightly tamp backfilled soil with your hand or butt of a trowel. After it compacts a bit, it may be necessary to add a bit more soil to accommodate for the soil that has compacted down.

It's also helpful to build up a small berm with soil around the root ball to help keep irrigation water around the plant as opposed to running off. Remove any excess soil and redistribute it in the landscape. Never pile up excess soil around the base of the plant.

Step 4: Watering.

Fully saturate each plant immediately after planting and berm is in place. Do not wait more than 10 minutes to water after the plant has been backfilled. In general, newly planted plants may need a thorough watering every day for 2 to 4 weeks, then begin to taper back for each plant's specific needs. Water times and frequency will vary dramatically based on plant, soil type, climate, season, etc. It is CRITICAL to understand what each plant will require in terms of watering schedules.

Step 5: Mulching.

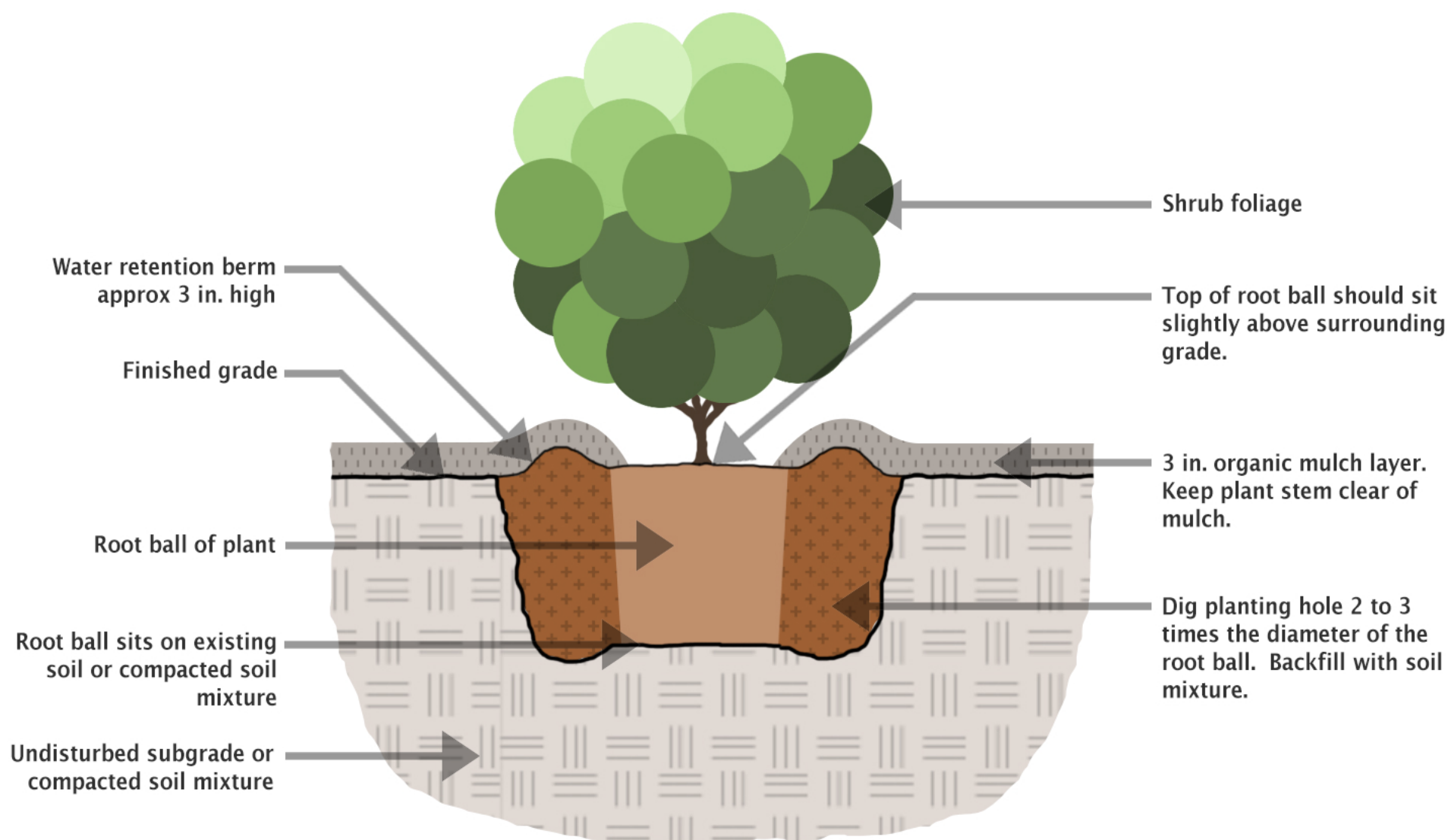
Once the plant is planted and watered thoroughly, many plants like to have a mulch covering. Mulch has many uses in the landscape. It helps retain ground moisture, acts as a weed abatement, and adds a nice aesthetic value. In many cases, plants prefer not to have mulch placed directly adjacent to its stem or trunk. Moisture at the stem or trunk can bring harmful insects and disease to the plant.

Additional factors to consider:

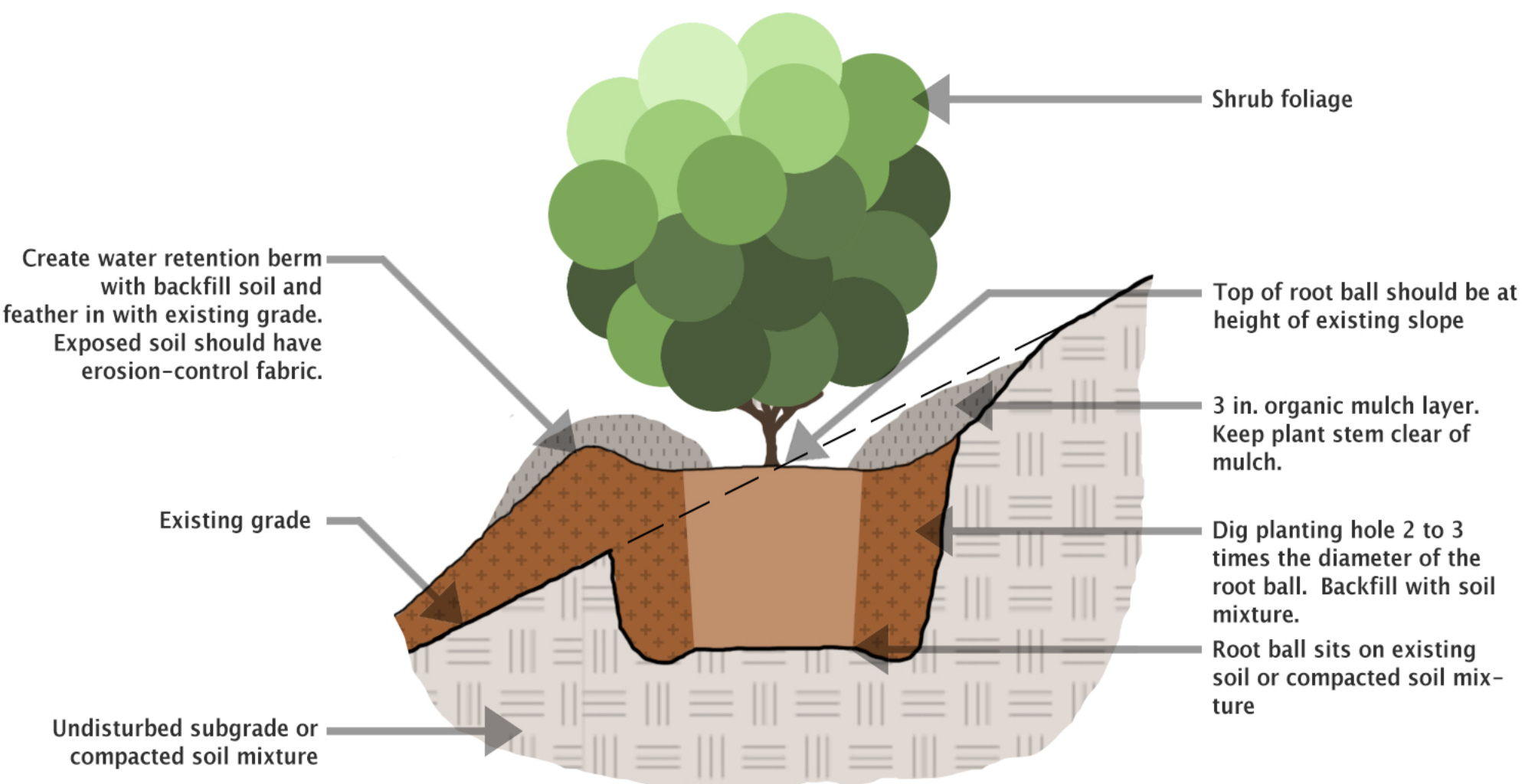
Some plants may desire more fertilization than others. In general, new plants do not like fertilization for the first couple years. Many California natives not like much (if any) fertilizers as well. Prolifically flowering ornamentals usually prefer some amount of regular fertilization to keep blooming and thriving. But over-fertilization can lead to rapid foliage growth that becomes too large for the root system to support.

Selective pruning is helpful for ongoing plant health and encourages the plants to keep an aesthetically pleasing form. Each plant like to be pruned in it's own way, so careful research should be done to understand how to provide the best care possible. In general, prune branches that have been broken, diseased, or visually out of balance to the shape of the plant as a whole. Typically, trees and woody shrubs will not need pruning for about 8-12 months after planting. Perennials may require dead-heading to keep looking tidy.

Keep a close eye on your plants in the establishing period. If something looks 'off', it's imperative to identify any issues quickly to remedy the situation. This guide is a generalization only. Each plant will have it's own unique requirements. For questions on planting or ongoing care, please contact us!



Shrub Planting Guide – Standard Grade



Shrub Planting Guide – Sloped Grade

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