

Frequently Asked Questions

What trees are available through the program?

Trees available include species that are native to the region. Some species that are commonly used include: Paper Birch, Sugar Maple, Freeman Maple, Bur Oak, Red Oak, Hackberry and Serviceberry. The provided handout sheet lists all the available species. This page also provides a link to an information page where you can get details on each species. The trees are between 5 to 8 feet tall at the time of planting.

Can I buy more than one tree?

Only one tree per property will be available at first. However, if there is excess tree stock available at the end of the deadline for commitment, and it is determined that there is enough space to plant more trees, we will consider allowing two or more trees to be planted per property. See also **What payment method is accepted?**

What are the tree planting consultation details?

A meeting will be set up with you and a LEAF arborist on your property to provide a tree planting consultation. The LEAF arborist will arrive at some point during a two-hour time window, but the consultation should take approximately 30 minutes. The consultation will include a site visit and the creation of a detailed site plan based on the arborist's expertise and your objectives. This site plan will identify the exact location for the tree to be planted. It is a good idea to try to think about some locations prior to your meeting to help with the process (see **"Where should I plant my tree?"**).

Measurements will be made at this time for your site plan, including measuring from property lines or fences, buildings and other existing vegetation. This will ensure that as your tree grows it will fit into your property's existing or future environment. Tree species will also be suggested based on your property's suitability including, future height and width, as well as the amount of light, soil type and moisture regime of your property. You will have until the payment date (October 4th) as stated in the application to make a final decision on your tree selection.

Where should I plant my tree?

Our experts can give advice on the best location for your tree. Here are some points to consider when thinking about planting a tree on your property:

- "West is best" – plant on the west or south west side of your home for passive energy savings and reduced air conditioning costs,
- Consider space— your tree will need space to grow, so make sure you consider the height and width at maturity,
- Look out for buildings – do not plant too close to your home's foundation or in a side yard next to another home,
- Avoid hard surfaces – avoid planting too close to patio stones or driveways.

Our spacing requirements are as follows:

- Area of available soft surface (small tree)- 10' x 10'
- Area of available soft surface (large tree)- 15' x 15'

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- Distance from fence/property line- 5’
- Distance from hard surfaces- 5-7’
- Distance from buildings with foundations- 10’
- Distance from existing trees- 15-20’ (including trees in neighboring yards)
- Distance from stumps- 8’
- Distance from swales- 5’
- Overhead wires- avoid
- Raised beds/containers- avoid

Can I change my trees location from the original detailed site plan agreed upon?

If you would like to move your tree from the spot originally agreed upon by yourself and the LEAF arborist which conducted your site consultation, you would have to call TRCA’s office administration staff, prior to TRCA arriving to plant your tree. There may be a \$50 administration charge to update your site plan. Please see, **“Where should I plant my tree?”**

How much space does my tree need?

This will depend on the species of tree that you choose. You should plant your tree in an area where it can reach its full width at maturity. Advice will be given during your consultation based on where you would like your tree planted and relative to species choices.

How far will the roots spread?

You can assume that the tree roots will spread to be as wide as the tree’s canopy at full maturity.

Can I exchange my tree for another tree?

Once the tree is planted there are no exchanges or refunds.

How long is the tree planting going to take?

The installation of your tree will take between 1 to 2 hours to complete. This will include: planting, mulching, (staking if necessary) and watering once.

Do I have to be present at the tree planting?

No, you don’t need to be present at the time of planting. TRCA will provide you with the exact date of the planting at least 2 days before TRCA staff are scheduled to come to plant your tree. The planting will take place between 8:30 am to 3:30 pm. Planting will take place between mid-October to mid-November.

***If you have a gate, please ensure that it is open for the TRCA staff to access the yard. If you have a dog, please keep it inside during planting.*

My tree has no leaves! Is there something wrong with it?

No. It is normal for trees to lose their leaves in the fall. Most of the trees delivered will have no leaves or will be losing their leaves. They will grow back again in the Spring.

Why are you not staking my tree?

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Not all trees need to be staked. Stakes hold the trunk of a tree very stationary, rather than allowing it to sway naturally in the wind. If a tree is not allowed to move naturally, it will not develop deep, stabilizing roots or strong wood along the trunk that is needed for support as it grows larger. Not staking a tree will result in a more stable and strong tree. In some extreme cases where there is a site exposed to persistent winds, stakes can be recommended, but they should only be left on for one year. This will allow for initial root establishment.

Is the tree covered by warranty?

TRCA's warranty covers the replacement of trees if they have not established new leaves by June 30th, 2020. The warranty does not cover replacement of trees that died as a result of neglect or lack of watering. TRCA will conduct an assessment to determine if the tree qualifies for the warranty. Replacement trees will be installed by the fall of the same year.

It is important to water your tree if there is a lack of rain. See **How often should I water my tree?**. During the summer if conditions are very dry and hot more than once a week might be necessary. Watching for wilting or dropping leaves and acting quickly can reduce the chance of top dieback or even death of your trees! You will be given a Planting and Care Guide at the time of planting, which outlines recommended watering and mulching techniques.

Note: The warranty is void if the tree is moved from its original planting location. See **"Can I change my trees location from the original detailed site plan agreed upon?"**

How often should I water my tree?

On average, young trees should be watered twice per week using approximately 6 gallons of water each time. That is the equivalent of using 3 full watering cans twice per week or using a hose with no nozzle on a very slow trickle for approximately 15 minutes twice per week. Avoid using a sprinkler to water because overhead watering causes wet foliage which is more prone to fungal disease. During the summer when the weather is above 30 degrees Celsius regularly, watering can probably be increased to three times a week. If the yard in which the tree is planted receives a full day of steady rain, this can be counted as one day of watering.

It is important to monitor the frequency and amount of water you give your tree because too much or too little water can impact overall health. During dry periods, soil can get very dry and compacted. Short, fast and heavy rainfall does little to help young trees because much of this rainfall runs off and doesn't reach their small root systems. Alternatively, if your soil has poor drainage, (sometimes in the case of heavy, dense clay soils), watering more than LEAF's recommended amount could lead to stress or even death because the soil may become waterlogged and your tree will be unable to obtain the oxygen it needs to flourish.

The best way to judge whether your tree needs water is to stick your finger deep into the soil underneath the mulch at the base of your tree before watering. If it is cool and moist, your tree should be good for another day or so. But if it is hot and dry and the ground is dry, your tree needs a drink!

Proper care ensures your tree will get the water it needs to thrive. Regular watering using proper methods encourages a healthy root system to establish in the first few years of growth and it is essential for photosynthesis – tree's food-making process.

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Note: Stop watering once the ground is frozen in late fall or winter. If you see frost on your grass for 5 days or more, and your tree is losing its leaves, this is a good indicator that it is time to stop watering.

What about utility cables and pipes in the ground?

As part of this special program, TRCA will obtain utility locates for your front yard / back yard on your behalf. All plantings require a Utility Locate (underground cables and pipes) to be done. We will organize a locate on your behalf, prior to planting.

What payment method is accepted?

We require payment to be made by Visa or Mastercard. At the end of the consultation and upon agreement to go ahead with the installation of a tree, we will request your payment information to have on file. The deadline for commitment to installation is October 4th, and all credit card payments will be processed at that time. You will receive an email informing you that your credit card will be processed on or shortly after October 5th. A receipt will be sent to you via email or mail.

What are the wood chips for and how should they be applied?

The natural mulch (woodchips) we use helps to retain moisture in the root zone of the tree. The mulch will also act as insulation for the roots in times of extreme temperature changes. As the mulch breaks down into the soil, it adds nutrients for the trees to absorb and helps break up compacted soils that are often found in residential neighbourhoods.

It is important to not heap or pile mulch against the trunk of the tree. The moist environment it creates can rot the tree and allow the introduction of fungal pathogens. Mulch should always be applied in a donut shape around the base of the tree with a gap between the trunk and the inside edge of the mulch ring. This gap allows for air circulation around the trunk and diminishes the chances of fungal growth.

How often should I fertilize my tree?

We do not recommend the use of synthetic fertilizers on the trees we plant. Native tree species are much hardier than the ornamental species that you might buy in a nursery. They have evolved to survive on their own. All your tree needs is mulch (see **What are the woodchips for and how should they be applied?**) and watering according to current weather conditions.

If you do decide to supplement your tree, the best options are backyard compost or an organic manure mix. These are slow release and won't 'burn' the roots of your new trees.

How can I protect my tree?

Damage to a tree's trunk can be fatal. It is important to provide protection if there are risks of the bark being destroyed by animals or mechanical processes such as weed trimming and grass cutting. There are various tree guards available at your local nursery. A tree guard is a malleable piece of plastic that wraps around the bottom of the tree trunk. Make sure it is breathable and retractable so it doesn't hold moisture and cause rot or molding. Remove the guard once it is starting to stretch out as the trunk increases in size.

How long will it take for my tree to grow?

The growth will be minimal in the first few years after the tree is planted. Starting between years 3 to 5 you can expect to start seeing growth of 1-3 feet in height per year.