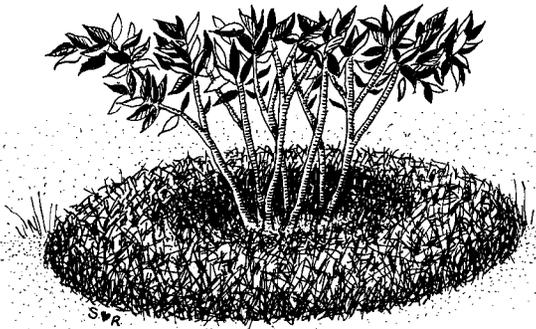


## Spacing

Anticipate the mature size of shrubs. Shrubs should never be planted too close to building foundations or walkways. Otherwise, when fully grown they may block windows, crowd or damage buildings, and interfere with foot traffic.

## Mulching

Place mulch (pine needles, straw, bark chips, or slightly decomposed or shredded leaves) 2 or 3 inches deep around the shrub. Mulch will reduce evaporation of water and reduce weed and grass growth around the plant. It also protects the shrub from lawn mower and string trimmer injury. Avoid overly deep mulch or piling the mulch up against the trunk of the shrub; this promotes shallow roots, disease, and pest injury.



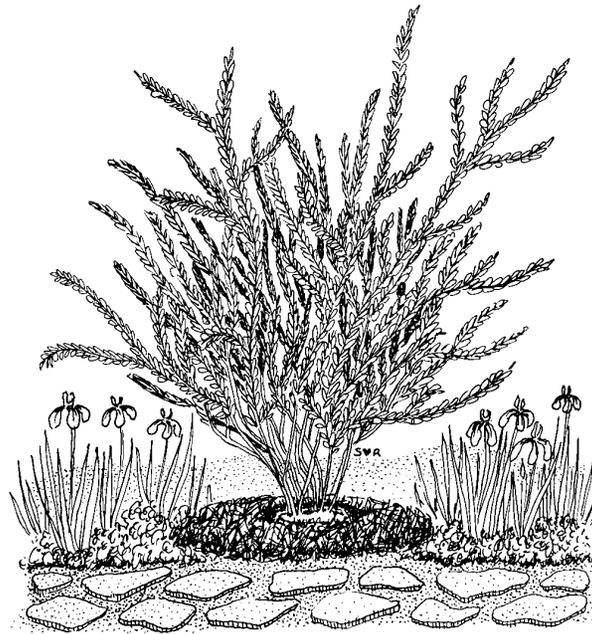
## Fertilizing

Applying the correct fertilizer at planting helps ensure healthy plants. Incorporate a slow-release fertilizer, preferably composed of 25 to 50 percent water insoluble nitrogen (WIN), into the soil backfill at planting time.

If your plant's growth is slow or its leaves appear paler than normal, have the soil tested (ask your local Extension agent for soil test forms and instructions) and follow the resulting recommendation. After the plant is established, check with your local Extension office to establish a regular program of fertilization.

For more information on selection, planting, cultural practices, and environmental quality, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension Office. If you want to learn more about horticulture through training and volunteer work, ask your Extension agent about becoming an Extension Master Gardener. For monthly gardening information, subscribe to *The Virginia Gardener Newsletter* by sending your name and address and a check for \$5.00 made out to "Treasurer, Va. Tech" to The Virginia Gardener, Department of Horticulture, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0349. Horticultural information is also now available on the Internet by connecting with Virginia Cooperative Extension's server at <http://www.ext.vt.edu>

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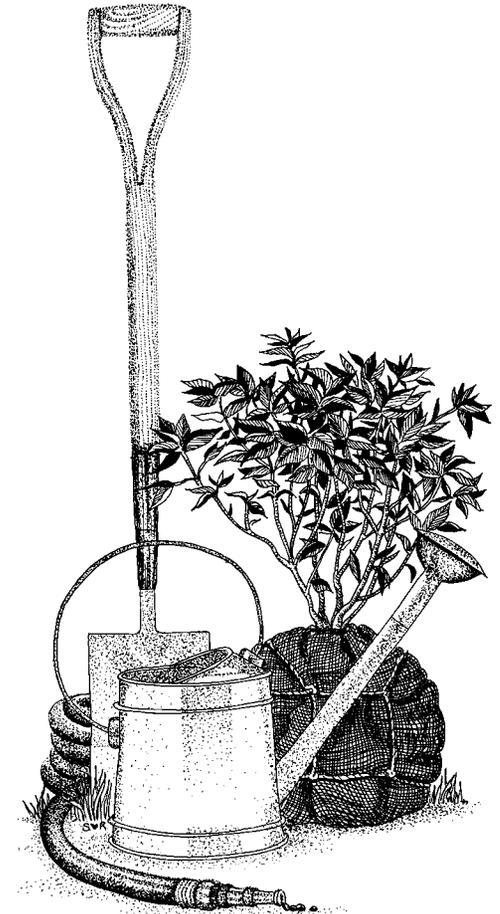
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Virginia  
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# Planting Shrubs



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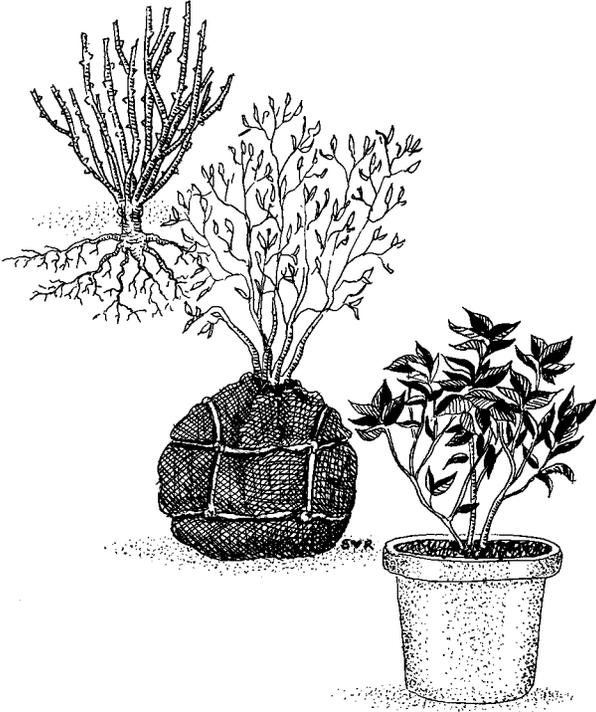
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VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Planting Shrubs

Planting shrubs is one of the smartest things you can do - both for yourself and your community. Shrubs can help increase the value of your property and provide privacy and beauty around your home.



Your shrub will come in one of four forms: bare-rooted, balled and burlapped (B&B), container-grown, or containerized. Plant bare-rooted shrubs in the late fall or early spring. Only deciduous plants are sold bare-rooted. Do not buy or plant a bare-rooted shrub which shows new growth. Container-grown plants or balled-and-burlapped shrubs may be planted at any time except when the ground is frozen. Some plants are *containerized* at the retail outlet; the retailer receives the plants either bare-rooted or balled-and-burlapped, and then pots them with soil. Make sure these plants have well-developed roots that hold the soil together when removed from the pot.

If possible, plant your shrub as soon as you get it home. Otherwise, it may dry out and be injured. If you can't

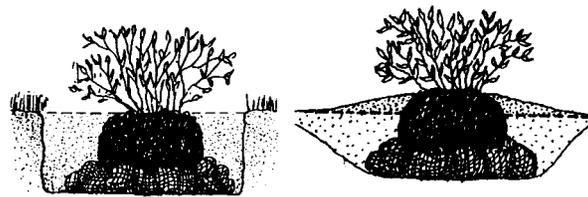
plant immediately, place it in a shady or sheltered spot. Cover the roots of bare-rooted shrubs with moist soil, sand, or peat moss. Keep the soil of balled-and-burlapped or container plants moist until planting.

### Planting

Since wet soils can reduce plant growth and survival, you should plant in a well-drained soil. To test for soil drainage, dig the hole for your new plant and fill it with water. If the water doesn't drain in 24 hours, plant elsewhere.

To plant the shrub, dig a hole at least twice as wide as the diameter of the shrub's root spread or root ball. Do not dig too deep; once the plant is placed in the hole, the top of the roots or root ball should be level or slightly above level with the surface of the ground. Remove all tags, wires, or ropes from the stems or trunk. **These can strangle and kill the plant as it grows.**

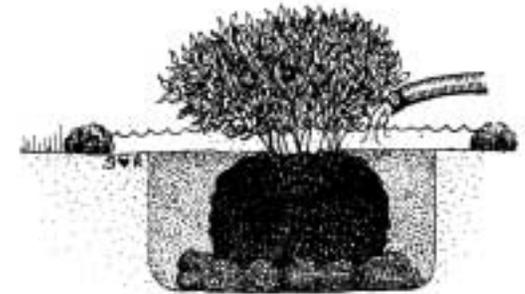
If the shrub is in a container, ease it out carefully without disturbing the root ball. Save the plastic pot to recycle. Cut any circling roots, then place the root ball in the hole. For balled-and-burlapped plants, place the plant in the hole *before* removing the burlap covering. Then, to ensure root growth and access to nutrients and water, pull the burlap down off the root ball and leave it in the bottom of the hole. Do not attempt to pull the burlap from under the plant - this could damage the root ball. If a balled-and-burlapped root ball is enclosed in a wire basket, and there is no other covering, the basket can be left in place. Cut the wires so they are all below the soil surface so they do not interfere with raking or cultivation.



Before planting bare-rooted shrubs, remove damaged or diseased roots with clean, sharp pruning shears. Untangle and spread the roots to a natural position. Then place the plant in the hole. For very heavy clay or compacted soils, the root ball may be one third above the soil surface.

When replacing the soil in the hole, do not add organic matter. If the original soil, or backfill, contains too much rock or construction debris, replace it with local topsoil. When the hole is about three fourths refilled, level and turn plant if necessary; tamp the soil down gently. Water the shrub heavily to eliminate air pockets. Then finish filling the hole with backfill to its original level. Use excess soil to build a berm or ring about 6 inches from the outside edge of the hole. Then water heavily again.

If shrubs are to be mass planted in a bed or where the entire planting area can be worked, the soil can be amended by incorporating 3 to 5 inches of organic matter into the entire bed to the depth equal to the height of the root ball. The shrubs are then planted into the amended area.



### Watering

Watering during dry periods of the first growing season is crucial, especially with container-grown plants. Container and balled-and-burlapped shrub roots dry out faster than the soil around them, so -it is particularly important to monitor their soil moisture. In the nursery, the roots of container and balled-and-burlapped shrubs become concentrated in a small root ball which is watered daily. After planting, the roots of these shrubs will eventually spread into surrounding soil. Until that happens, however, the shrubs continue to draw water mostly from their root ball. Consequently, if the soil near the trunk is dry, shrubs need water.

Water heavily once a week during periods of no rain. Use a garden hose to slowly soak the soil. Always allow the water to reach the top of the berm built around the plant. This will provide deep water penetration and encourage widespread root development. Always check the soil moisture before watering to avoid overwatering as this can kill the plant.