

Quick Guide for Planting Garry Oaks

Oak Harbor Garry Oak Society www.ohgarryoaksociety.org 05/2016

Thank you for supporting Garry oak conservation on Whidbey Island. We've created the following tips to ensure your oak will grow healthy and strong.

- The **optimal time of year to plant** Garry oak seedlings or saplings is the late fall–early winter. If seedlings are heavily root bound then transplant while maintaining the main taproot as much as is possible. (The taproots are the largest, thickest root usually at the center of the root system.)
- It is best to choose an **open, sunny site**. Oaks flourish when they aren't competing for sunlight, so don't place the seedling or sapling under the canopy of conifer trees. Garry oaks can be planted on a wide range of soil types. However, choose a site that has well-drained soils that are neither overly dry nor seasonally flooded.
- Dig a hole at least several inches wider than the outermost roots spread out to the sides of the hole and a couple of inches deeper than the depth of the roots. If the soil is very dense and compacted, give the seedling or sapling the best chance to flourish by using a shovel to break up the solid dirt for several feet beyond the roots. If possible, take about four cups of soil from an existing healthy, full-grown Garry oak, to put into the hole you dig for your seedling or sapling. The soil from well-established oaks will have beneficial mycorrhizal fungi in the soil and will help your oak to thrive. Consider adding steer manure or some other amendment mixed into the hole.
- Clear away grass and weeds around the seedling or sapling about a foot beyond the width of the hole you have dug.
- Place mulch about 3" deep around the tree in the fall and early spring. (Ideally, the mulch should be Garry oak leaf and bark mulch from mature Garry oak trees.) The mulch will help reduce weeding and watering needs. Keep some space between the base of the tree and the mulch in order to prevent decay of the trunk.
- **Water regularly** (1 to 2 times per week) during the dry seasons for the first few years until the seedling or sapling is established.
- Use wire mesh and landscape staples or stakes to form a "cage" around your seedling or sapling to **protect** it from weed eaters, lawn mowers, and animals such as deer, rabbits, and voles. Chicken wire works when voles aren't present. If voles are present, tree tubes or hardware cloth cages work well, but must be secured into the soil to prevent tunneling under. Tree tubes also extend the growing season and increase growth rate through creation of a greenhouse effect.
- For more comprehensive guide please read *Planting Native Oak in the Pacific Northwest*, a U.S. Forest Service publication, at the following link:
http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/pubs/pnw_gtr804.pdf