Tim's Tips

Learn the tips and tricks Nature Hills Nursery's Horticulturist has gathered over the years.

#ProPlantTips by Nature Hills Nursery
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Ok, So Who's Tim?

Who's Tim? Well, I suppose the short answer is Tim's our head horticulturist and favorite plant nerd here at NatureHills.com and has been for the past 14 years. When you're learning something new on our site, odds are it came straight from him.

The long answer would take all day so I'll cut to the chase. He has a degree in Horticulture and Turf Management from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and has over 40 years of experience in the industry.

Look, someone has to brag for him because he'll never brag about himself.

Over the years, whenever we'd ask Tim a question, not only would he give us the answer, he'd explain the reasoning behind it. He's a great teacher and after a while we started saving all of his tips and tricks thinking someday we could put them together to share.

Anyways, I hope you enjoy learning from the master himself as much as our team here has.

- Jeff Dinslage
  CEO of Nature Hills Nursery, Inc.
Taking Citrus Outside in the Spring

Moving citrus trees outside for the warm months is a great idea. However, a sudden transition from indoors to outdoors will shock your plant! Follow these simple steps when preparing your citrus tree for the summer months.

1. Monitor the temperatures in your area. Once the danger of frost is gone and the night temps no longer dip below 50 degrees, you can begin.

2. Bring your tree outdoors to a place with bright, indirect sunlight and lots of protection from the wind.

3. Each day it's outside, increase the direct sunlight it gets by one hour until it's getting at least 8 hours of full sun per day.

4. Go ahead and fertilize regularly throughout the spring and first half of summer and don't forget to keep your watering schedule!

SHOP CITRUS TREES
When Will I See Fruit On My Fruit Tree?

It is very common to see fruit on your plant within the first year!

Deciduous woody fruit trees may produce fruit during the second and third years.

Did you know that deciduous trees shed their leaves annually?

If your citrus tree is getting optimal light, you may start seeing fruit within the first year.

When indoors, your citrus tree may drop leaves. This is a normal part of their life cycle!

Smaller fruit bearing plants can grow fruit fairly quickly and the fruit crops increase nicely each year.
Pruning Process for Fruit Trees

Here are some rules of thumb to remember when you bring out the pruning sheers! For more information, read here!

1. Prune branches at a 45-degree angle just above a bud that faces outward from the tree’s canopy.

2. Cut back to the larger limb flush without cutting beyond the ‘collar’ of the branch. This prevents disease or insects from slipping beneath the bark.

3. When reducing the length of any branch, do not cut more than 1/3 of the length of that branch.

Leave as much healthy growth as possible to encourage strong, horizontal branching that will support fruit.

The collar of the branch is the bulbous area that is attached to the trunk or a bigger branch.
Root Booster & Root Stimulator

At Nature Hills, we have a couple of things that you can use to help your plants become stronger and establish faster.

**Nature Hills Root Booster**

Nature Hills Root Booster introduces mycorrhizal fungi to the soil.

Mycorrhizal fungi is a symbiotic relationship where the fungi provides more water and absorbs nutrients while the plant provides the fungus with carbohydrates.

**Root Stimulator**

Root stimulator helps your plants grow new roots sooner. Faster root development means it establishes faster and gives your plant a better chance of surviving after its journey to your doorstep!
How to Apply Root Booster and Stimulator

**Root Booster**

Nature Hills Root Booster should be added to the soil that comes in contact with the root ball of your new plant. Mix Root Booster to the backfill soil used in the top 8 inches of the planting hole. Water it in well. This can also be used after planting by working it into the topsoil and watering it in well!

Use at least 2 ounces of granular Root Booster per gallon size container or 2 ounces per foot of height.

**Root Stimulator**

Use root stimulator every time you plant trees, shrubs, roses, annuals, and perennials to stimulate early root formation and stronger root development. It also reduces transplant shock and promotes greener, more vigorous plants. Mix in 3–1/2 liquid tablespoons of the root stimulator per gallon of water.
Bareroot Shipping Prep

As soon as bareroot plants are completely dormant, they are lifted from the ground at our nurseries. Then, the plants are transported to a large cooler where the temperature is kept just above freezing and the humidity is kept at 90% or higher. This keeps it viable and "sleeping"!

Before shipping, the roots are dipped into water, laid down on special wrapping and then some moisture retaining packing material is added to keep the roots from getting "thirsty".

Lastly, the plants are boxed and sent on their way to you!

There are many benefits to adding bareroot plants to your landscape! They establish quicker, shipping is easier on the plant, and they're cheaper! It's a win–win–win!
Your Bareroot Plant Arrived! Now What?

**Step 1**
First, open the box and cut off all the packaging that protected the plant from damage during the shipping process.

Place only the roots in a room temperature tub or bucket of water and keep the plants out of the sun. This will rehydrate your bareroot.

**Step 2**

After soaking, it's time to plant! Dig and hole and make sure you don't plant it too deep.

**Step 3**

**IMPORTANT NOTE!**

- Always keep the roots covered to avoid drying them out.
- Always soak the roots before planting.
- Bareroot plants can be stored for several days until you're ready to plant.
Dead Leaves on Bareroot Plants?

Sometimes a few leaves from the previous year's growth may still be attached and that is normal and will drop off when it starts to grow. Check out the following steps and your plant should thrive.

Submerge Roots in Water

When planting, cover roots, but not too deep

Completely saturate the soil that the plant was planted into and add more water as needed until dormant
What exactly is Dormancy?

Plants will go through a period of temporary suspension and growth, which is called dormancy.

Plants go dormant so they can conserve energy they have stored and can then withstand low temperatures, high temperatures, or lack of water or food. The length of the dormancy will depend upon when the conditions change and they can start growing again.

What Triggers Dormancy?

- Environmental factors like the onslaught of low temperatures or high temperatures.
- Genetic factors like nutrient or water shortages

Plants enter dormancy for more than just cold weather, so even plants in warm regions may also have a dormancy period too.
The Plant Came... What Now?
When Can I Plant?

It's a great question and very easy to answer. If the ground isn't frozen, you can go ahead and plant—no matter the season!

Did You Know?
If you plant while the ground is frozen, the roots will struggle to establish in the hard dirt.

Here's an Easy Rule to Follow:
If we ship your plant to you, then it's safe to plant! We won't ship anything while the ground is frozen.

Did You Know?
While spring and fall are the best time to plant, summer works well too as long as you water your plant well and often.
Plants Delivered and the Ground is Frozen

Sometimes there's an unexpected snowstorm or temperature drop once your plant is already on its way. DON'T WORRY—here are some tips to keep your plant happy and healthy until the ground thaws enough to plant.

**Bare Root Plants**
- Add water to roots while leaving them wrapped as they came.
- Put a plastic garbage bag over the roots and packing and tie the bag to encase the entire roots and packing materials.
- The place the plant, packaging materials, and the newly added plastic garbage bag back into the box, but leave top open.
- Place the box inside of an unheated building so they will stay dormant but they don't need light.

**Container Plants**
- Take the plant out of the box and open top of plastic encasing to water the soil well.
- Re-wrap the plastic and place it back in the pot.
- Put in the box and leave the top of box open.
- Store in an unheated enclosed place.

**IMPORTANT:**
You do not need to wait for spring to plant. Just wait for the next day above freezing and plant then. Make sure to water it in well!
You may see some loose soil when your container plants get delivered from the trip, but it's not a cause for concern. Simply plant the root ball in the ground and water well.

When receiving a container plant, we suggest you plant it immediately and soak the soil thoroughly which will eliminate any air pockets around the root mass and rehydrate the soil well.

- Damaged leaves won't fix themselves, but they do still make food, and new leaves will be produced once your plant gets established.

- Make sure to continue watering right up until the ground freezes in the winter. If the ground isn't frozen, your plant will continue to want a drink.
Your new plants will depend on you for water during their first growing season. Make sure to water thoroughly and often. Not sure how to tell when your plant is thirsty? Use the finger test.

The finger test: Stick a finger up to the second knuckle in the dirt at the base of the plant. Then, follow the rules below:

- dry dirt = water away!
- wet dirt = no water needed!
A plant that is planted too deep does not grow. Know how deep to plant each plant so that it can thrive in your garden. Planting, backfilling, watering, and then mulching means lots of opportunities for that plant to simply be too deep in the ground.

Planting a tree too deep in the ground means the trunk flare (the lowest part of that trunk just above the root).

With a container plant you simply plant as deep as the plant is already growing in the pot and not deeper.

With bare root shrubs (example of a lilac), it may be difficult to see where the plant was growing. Most lilacs will have one single stem from the root and will branch above that root about 4–5"
Dreaming of Spring
Why are there No Flowers on my Hydrangea Tree?

Depending upon the time of year your Hydrangeas are shipped, they may not have flowers on them. Sometimes when we ship our Hydrangeas grown as Trees, we'll prune them so the plants don't break during shipment. Once your plant arrives, follow the planting instructions and your plant will establish well.

What to Do:

- Plant as normal
- Water well
- Patience
- Enjoy!

More on Planting Hydrangeas...
Always Pick the Best site for your Plants

The importance of choosing the proper site for your plants:

- It will preform the best (bigger flowers, more flowers, more robust foliage, and more vigor)
- Can recover better from insect disease problems
- You will be happier with the result!

Both plants below were the same age, the same cultivar, and the same climate in the yard.

Located in the sun

Located in the shade

Site your plants as suggested (check out naturehills.com if you aren't sure what is suggested)! Be sure to check for the preferred sun, shade, well-drained soils, and correct hardiness zone.
Some roses are grafted onto a different kind of rose that is used as its root system to support large flowered blooms. Grafting insures that the rose has good vigor and helps some rose types to produce stronger canes and larger, well-formed blooms.

**Hybrid Tea Roses**

**Grandiflora Roses**

**Floribunda Roses**

**Tree Roses**
What Qualifies as an Evergreen

Evergreen trees or shrubs are plants that hold their needles or leaves in all seasons.

All evergreens become the bones of garden design by defining the landscape with year round interest. They are perfect for screening in all seasons and offer protection and food to many wildlife.

Evergreens offer winter interest in areas that may not have a lot going on and offer a great backdrop to highlight your favorite grasses or plants that show up nicely against the dark backdrop.

Be sure to check out our Broadleaved Evergreens for an elegant shrub that can be used front and center in the highest profile spots in every landscape.
All About
German Bearded Iris

**Irises** are the flowers for you if you want something easy to plant, easy to take care of, and easy to enjoy!

**Full Sun**

Try and plant in an area that gets at least 6 hours of sun per day.

**Well-Drained Soil**

Planting in well-drained soil is mandatory. Iris will not thrive in overly moist conditions. Dark, rich soils are best.

**Planting Depth**

Rhizomes need light! Plant your Iris so that 1/3rd of each rhizome is exposed to the sun.

Keep your Iris healthy and growing vigorously by dividing them into 12–18 inch sections in August or early September.

When planting, lay the rhizome horizontally across the soil and spread the roots out around it in the loosened dirt.