

FLORIDA MUDCUTTERS TREE PLANTING GUIDE

One of the goals of the Mudcutters is to eventually have at least 70% of the CRP bike trail shaded. In order to accomplish this a tree planting program has been developed by volunteers with knowledge of tree planting and the initiative to move forward to accomplish this goal.

Collecting native Florida trees is done by finding tree seedlings in the Park, growing trees from acorns or seeds, propagating from cuttings from mature trees, and purchasing trees from local nurseries. Lee County Parks and Recreation has partnered with the Mudcutters in the effort by purchasing some of the trees for our planting.

Tree planting workdays are scheduled by the Mudcutters just prior to the start of the rainy season, usually in June of each year. Volunteers to help with this work are especially needed and vital to achieving our goal. The steps in planting the trees are listed below to help workday leaders to have a well organized and successful planting day.

Planting sites are chosen prior to the workday so that trees, tools, equipment, and volunteers all get to the work areas focused on getting the trees into the ground.

- 1) Holes for trees should be dug no deeper than the depth of the container the tree is in. They may, and should be dug wider.
- 2) When the tree is removed from its container it is important to inspect the roots to see that they are not "root bound" or too tightly wrapped from being in the container. If they are they should be pulled apart and some smaller roots may need cutting to make sure the roots can grow outward from the center.
- 3) With the tree now placed in the hole loose dirt can be firmed in around the root ball making sure there are no air spaces. If using water absorbing gel pellets, now would be the time to work them into the fill soil.
- 4) Soaking the tree root zone now is the most effective way to water completely and to settle in the soil.
- 5) A layer of composted manure or light application of fertilizer can now be top dressed.
- 6) A weed barrier of two sheets of newspaper, or a layer of weed blocking fabric is applied now. On top of this should be any type of wood chip mulch. This hides the fabric or paper and helps to conserve moisture in the soil.

- 7) Protection for the tree is needed to keep deer and other wildlife from damaging the tree trunk. For small trees under 4 feet, welded wire fencing is used. For larger trees a piece of corrugated 4" plastic drain pipe is sliced lengthwise and placed around the trunk. The welded wire is held in place by 1 or 2 ground stakes, the plastic pipe is secured with 2 zip ties.
- 8) Now that the tree is planted attention turns to adequate watering. Until the rains begin with regular frequency, a watchful eye must be kept on their condition. Thorough watering should be given at least every other day if possible, with each tree getting a minimum of 2 gallons. After about two weeks, if regular rains haven't begun, watering may be less often IF the tree is showing signs of new growth.