

PLANTING YOUR FRUIT TREE

- ❑ If your tree is bare-rooted, plant it immediately. Cut off any damaged roots with a pair of secateurs. Remove about 1-inch from the ends of the main roots and place the roots in water for 1-2 hrs to help re-hydrate the plant.
- ❑ If your tree is potted, remove the pot and tease out any roots that are winding around the pot. This will encourage the roots to grow outwards. Provided the tree is dormant, it does no harm to shake out the pot completely. Dig a hole a little bigger than the root ball. Too deep a hole can result in an underground sump in clay soils, which may collect water and kill the tree.
- ❑ Hammer in a vertical stake to the windward side. A tanalised, 2- 3 inch round fencing stake 5'6" long is ideal but smaller stakes are quite satisfactory. This will help to support the tree for the first few years while it gets established. Place the tree in the hole and turn it around until it lines up neatly about 2 inches from the stake.
- ❑ Mix 2 handfuls of bone meal and some garden or multipurpose compost with the excavated soil to improve the nutrient levels and encourage rapid root growth. Do not put farmyard manure in the hole, no matter how well rotted, as this may kill the young roots if soil conditions are wet. Refill the hole with the enriched soil, tamping down lightly with the foot as you go to eliminate air pockets.
- ❑ Tie the tree to the stake with a tie near the top of the stake. Saw off any surplus stake to reduce the risk of rubbing.
- ❑ If you have a good supply of farmyard manure, spread this around the tree and use a mulch mat or place an old piece of carpet around the base of the tree to prevent the grass and weeds growing. This is vital for the first few years as the grass competes with the young tree roots for nutrients.
- ❑ Make a rabbit guard to protect the tree from vermin and strimmers. Some chicken wire or plastic mesh about 2 feet high is ideal. Don't use spiral guards for fruit trees as these attract mice and ants, which can damage the bark. The humid condition inside the spiral guards also encourages canker.
- ❑ If you intend to graze around the tree with geese, sheep, goats or cattle you will need further protection. The easiest way is to use wrap a 6-foot length of 1-inch chicken wire vertically around the tree and attach it to a long post with staples. Wind some barbed wire in a spiral around the chicken wire tube and staple it to the pole at several points to give support.
- ❑ If you are planting a countryside stewardship funded orchard you may be asked to build a post and rail cage around the tree, using sheep netting and barbed wire. This will need to be at least 4 feet square to prevent the animals reaching the tree and nibbling the bark.