

# CARE OF BAREROOT STOCK IN THE NURSERY

1. Set aside an adequate area to unload the trees which has water and is close to where you plan to store bareroot stock.
2. In **unloading**, the driver or employee should:
  - a. Check the temperature - unloading not recommended if below freezing.
  - b. Carefully climb into the truck so as not to damage trees.
  - c. Hand out trees or drop them sideways - do not drop trees on their roots or tops. Throwing trees damages the trees and is dangerous to other employees.
  - d. Do not walk or step on trees any more than is necessary.
  - e. Stack in easy-to-work-with piles.
  - f. Make notes on Bill of Lading or Invoice as to any potential problems with truck, stock, delivery time, etc.
3. **Water the roots and tops of trees immediately** to prevent dehydration. Keep the roots moist at all times, since dehydration is the biggest single potential problem with bareroot material. We spend a great deal of effort getting the trees to you in a moist condition.
4. If trees are stored prior to being put away, **avoid the use of plastic covers** as these will generate and store solar heat. We recommend the use of old rug pads available from local carpet stores for covering the trees to protect from frozen roots. Experience shows 10-20 degrees temperature difference with rug pad protection, as opposed to only 1 degree with plastic and 4 to 7 degrees with canvas tarps.
5. Upon **receiving bareroot trees** put away promptly in a shaded area, in straight coarse sand (river sand) - not sawdust or shavings. Avoid toxic materials such as Redwood, Cedar, Barks and Cotton Gin Trash. **Keep roots moist at all times.** Don't let trees lie around. Heeling in has top priority over anything else!
  - a. Open the bundles as you heel them in the display bins to avoid a double operation, plus eliminating some air pockets.
  - b. This is the ideal **pruning** time -- many nurseries prefer to prune the tops before the customers see the trees. Cutting the tops 1/3 to 1/2 will help to make the trees grow and helps prevent dehydration. **Avoid root pruning**, with the exception of broken and extra-long roots. Do not top Birch trees.
  - c. Even if you can your trees, you should still heel them in first so they do not lie around and so you are not rushed to can them. It is important to have the proper size containers.
  - d. Nurseries which pre-sell trees may want to set aside the pre-sold trees in a separate bin or immediately deliver the trees.
6. **Display Bins - Where to Place and How to Heel trees in.**
  - a. Avoid dry windy exposure when setting up bareroot bins.
  - b. Place the trees in the bins according to some pre-arranged order. The first trees in should be those which dehydrate very rapidly, such as Albizia (mimosa), Birch, Mulberry, Texas Umbrella, etc.
  - c. Separate the trees with enough space so they will be easy to pull.
  - d. The roots must be wet before placing them in the bins so the storage medium will cling to the roots.
  - e. Plant from the back to the front of the bins. This way the tree at the front can be pulled without others coming out also.
  - f. Soak the storage medium with water pressure so the trees are firmly planted to avoid air pockets. We recommend something like a four foot aluminum pipe attached to a hose and stuck below ground. Watering by flooding will not break up air pockets.
  - g. If you are in a dry, windy area, a careful misting of the tops of the trees will help prevent dehydration. Do not let this create an over-watering of the storage medium.
  - h. Sand in storage bins should be kept moist. Do not rely on light rains. **DO NOT OVER-WATER, as roots standing in water will sour.** Deciduous trees require minimal water until they begin to leaf.

## CARE OF BAREROOT STOCK IN THE NURSERY (Continued)

7. Place labels and price the trees.
8. Label the bins to help customers find the tree sections.  
Example: Fruit trees - Shade trees - Nut trees - Flowering Trees.  
Arrange by marketing plan or alphabetically within each bin - not just invoice order!
9. Make sure **tie-in sales** items are set up nearby. Proper handling during a sale may impress the customer with the need for giving the tree proper care at home. After pulling a tree for a customer, be sure the roots of the adjacent trees are covered. Trees that are pulled and then put back must again have their roots wet first, then properly packed back into the bin.

To insure continued moisture, the customer's tree should be properly wrapped prior to being taken home.

**Reminder:** Do not can up trees into a mix using more than 1/3 organic material. Recommended mix is by volume, 1/3 sandy loam top soil, 1/3 coarse cement sand and 1/3 fir shavings. No Redwood, Cedar, pine or fir bark or cotton gin trash.

**Caution:** Pecan trees have extra sensitive roots. Be sure the entire root section below the old soil line is well covered in storage, canning and planting.

**A Valuable Tip:** If a tree does not leaf out at the proper time, lay the tree in your bareroot bin and bury it completely, top to bottom for several days. This will put it back into a moist, plump condition thereby saving for you a tree that might be held back by delayed foliation.

Deciduous trees require a minimum amount of chilling before they break dormancy. Chilling is defined as the number of hours at 45 degrees or below. Example: If Elberta Peach has to have 800 hours of chilling, it means that the tree needs to be planted in an area that has 45 degree weather or colder for at least 800 hours each winter. Many trees will not break dormancy if they do not receive sufficient chilling time. This is a good reason to keep in a shaded area.

Refer to University of Calif. Agriculture Extension Service Publication Circular #179, entitled *Deciduous Orchards in California's Winters*. This is available to you on request at your local Farm Advisor's office.

Following the above suggestions will insure fewer losses on bareroot stock in your nursery. If your customer plants them properly, your bareroot stock will show greater profit. Remember, plants are living material subject to the whims of nature and man, and no one can guarantee that a certain one will thrive. We grow and handle your plants and trees carefully to get them to you in excellent condition. Do not be indifferent to their requirements.

### SALES TIPS

Before you are ready to sell, double check your set-up and preparations. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are all the tags on the trees? Are the trees priced?
2. Are the bins well marked and in order for the convenience of your customers?
3. Are displays containing pictures and information of each tree posted and available for customer review?
4. Is there a map to help customers locate items in the nursery?

To be most effective in selling your nursery stock and pleasing your customers, every salesman should know some of the facts of each tree, its fruiting or blooming season, necessary climatic conditions, its type of fruit or flower, and the advantages or disadvantages of the tree in different settings. Every salesman should carry with him a Descriptive Guide containing the prices printed in it. This guide should be near the phone or cash register. The guide could also be available to the customer at any displays that are set up.