



Understanding the Community Tree Management Ordinance

Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

New Tree Establishment

During land development, often trees will need to be planted to meet certain federal / local requirements (e.g., parking lot tree, street tree, buffer, and total canopy). In such cases, Athens-Clarke County will regulate the tree installation to prevent improper practices that can lead to stunted trees and tree death. Also, these trees planted to meet the requirements of the tree ordinance are protected and must be replaced if they die and, ultimately, this can become very costly for property owners practicing poor planting or post planting care.

Establishment Standards

- Trees must have a minimum caliper of 2 inches
- No more than 30% of any one species can be planted
- Trees may be container grown or balled-and-burlapped
- Trees cannot be planted over property lines or over property corners
- A tree planting area cannot be less than 3 feet wide in any one direction
- Trees that require staking, have severe forks, or have other defects will not be counted for canopy credit
- Appropriate species must be used for parking lot and street trees



Trees are best planted in the dormant season between November and February.

Soils

Soil provides the essential nutrients and materials for tree growth, and when soil composition and chemistry are ignored, trees can easily become weak or die. Developed sites often have poor quality soils resulting from the development process itself or from importing poor soil. Overall, quality soils are needed to produce healthy, long living trees.

Soil Standards

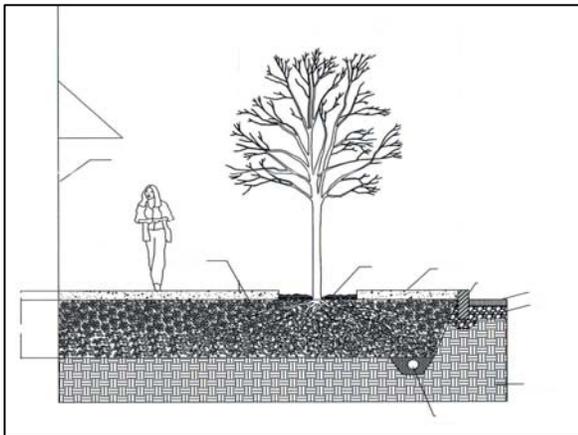
- Soils must be aerated to a depth of 8 inches and must have at least 5% organic matter
- The soil pH in a planting zone must be between 5.8 and 7.0
- Soil surface area:
 1. Very small canopy trees must have at least 25 square feet of open soil surface area
 2. Small canopy trees must have at least 100 square feet of open soil surface area
 3. Medium canopy trees must have at least 225 square feet of open soil surface area
 4. Large canopy trees must have at least 400 square feet of open soil surface area
- Permeable pavements or structural soils* can reduce the required open soil surface area



Soils compacted this badly will never support enough roots to sustain healthy trees.



A lack of open soil surface area causes this tree to be stunted and in poor health.



**Structural soils provide a growing medium that can support heavy loads while providing room for tree roots.*



Permeable pavement increase the amount of available mineral soil on a highly-developed site.

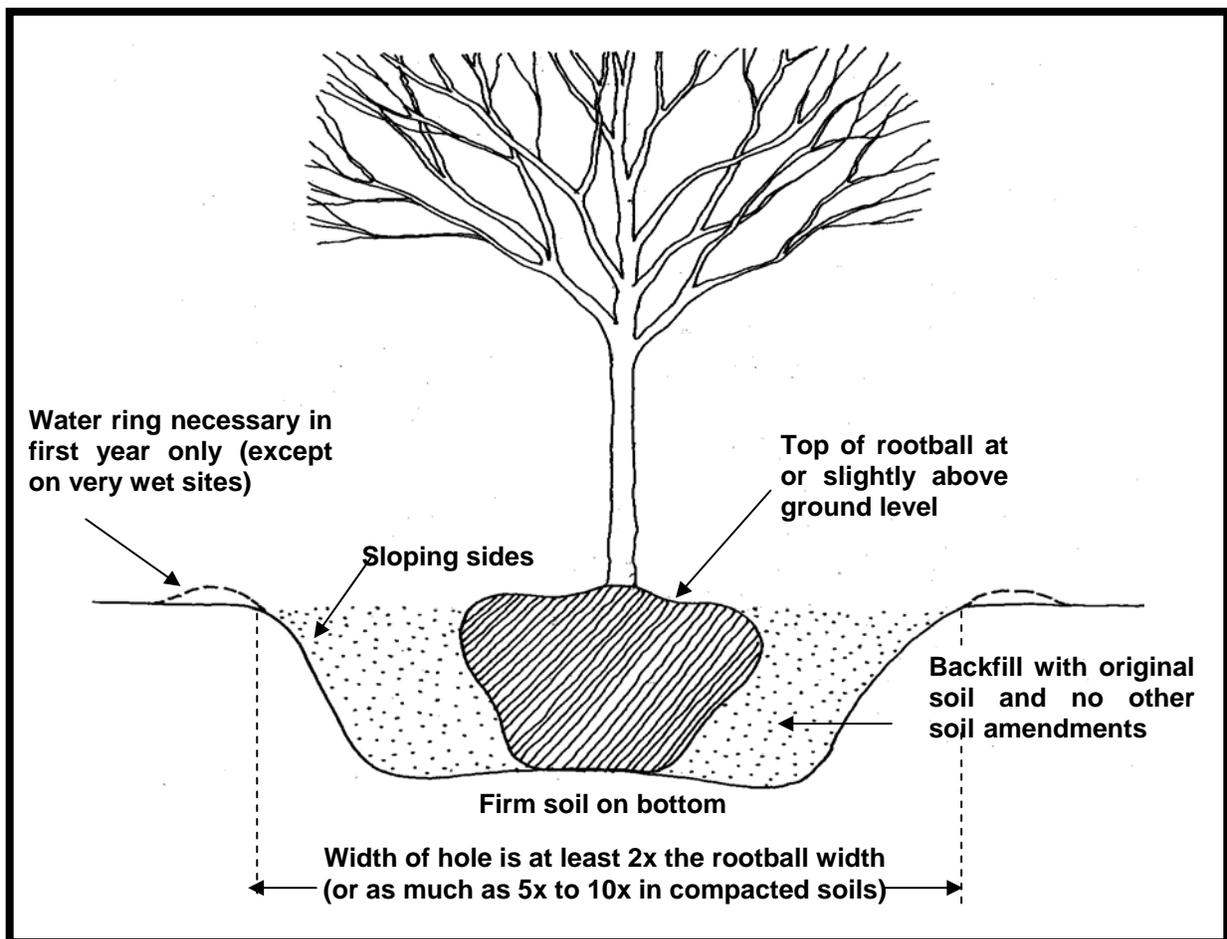
Planting Trees

Many dangerous myths surround tree planting, and these beliefs can lead to practices that are detrimental to tree health. To prevent such practices and ensure the trees have the greatest success possible on a site, Athens-Clarke County standards are in place. If trees are planted to meet tree ordinance requirements, Athens-Clarke County will regulate the manner in which they are established.

Planting Standards

- The planting hole needs to be 2-3 times wider than the root ball
- The planting hole may not be deeper than the root ball; ideally the junction between the trunk and roots should be approximately 2" above ground level at the time of planting
- The planting hole sides need to slope inward from the top and the bottom must have firm soil
- Soil amendments may not be used in the planting hole
- The trunk flare must be visible above ground level
- Strapping, webbing, strings, twine, and other foreign materials must be removed from the root ball
- Burlap and wire basket materials must be removed to a depth of at least 12 inches
- Staking must be removed within one year
- Trees must be immediately pruned after planting to remove dead, broken, rubbing and diseased branches
- Trees must be mulched immediately after planting, and mulching must meet the mulching standards of the ordinance
- When rainfall is less than one inch per week, planted trees in their first growing season should receive equivalent to one inch per week

Planting Diagram



For more information, contact the Athens-Clarke County Community Forestry Coordinator at (706)613-3561 voice, (706)613-3566 fax, or by e-mail at forester@co.clarke.ga.us.