

# Planting & Care of Hemlock Sapling

**What You'll Need** – These are suggestions. Call the Hemlock Help Line for advice regarding substitutions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr. Natural Woodland Soil Mix or any other good quality soil amendment</li><li>• Espoma HollyTone or any slow-release, acid-based fertilizer labeled for azaleas, camellias, etc.</li><li>• Soil Moist or other water saver granules for water retention</li><li>• Ironite granules</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gallon jug for mixing initial watering solution</li><li>• Miracle-Gro Quick Start liquid</li><li>• Bayer Advanced Tree &amp; Shrub for 1 year of HWA protection</li><li>• Water</li><li>• Shredded hardwood mulch</li><li>• Bamboo stake &amp; velcro tape if not already attached</li></ul>
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**Timing** – The best time to plant a hemlock is early fall when the soil temperature is still warm enough to encourage root development but the air temperature is cooling down. Second best is late winter / early spring before the flush of new growth.

**Choosing the Planting Site** – Hemlocks can tolerate full sun if they have an adequate amount of moisture, but they prefer semi-shade or at least afternoon shade in a moist but well-drained (not soggy) location. The best setting is on a north- or east-facing slope, in a ravine, or near a stream.

## Preparing the Planting Hole

1. Dig when the soil is either dry or just damp enough to make a clump when compressed; don't dig when the soil is wet
2. **Dig a hole** 3 times the width of the container or root ball (i.e., you could place the pot or root ball in the hole 3 times in a triangle) but only 2-3" deeper than the dirt in the container or the root ball. Pile the removed dirt next to the hole.
3. **Combine the native soil** removed from the hole with soil amendment in a ratio of 1 part amendment to 2 parts native soil. Put 2-3 inches of this soil mix back into the bottom of the hole

## Planting the Tree

1. Hemlock trees are shallow rooted, so the key to successful planting is to be sure the tree ends up "at grade," i.e., at the same level as it was originally in the ground or pot.
  - a. **If tree is in a container**, remove container carefully by turning it upside down in your hands and catching the root ball. Gently "tickle" the root hairs so they're facing outwards. If the roots are pot-bound, use a sharp tool to make several half-inch deep slits in the root mass to free them. Place the tree in the center of the hole.
  - b. **If tree is bare-rooted**, place it in center of hole and gently spread roots out.
  - c. **If tree is balled and burlapped**, remove wire or cord but do *not* remove burlap yet. Place tree in center of hole and refill hole halfway with soil mix. Then open the burlap and lay it out flat in the hole so that no part of the fabric will come in contact with the surface of the ground.
2. Be sure the top of the root ball is **sitting at least 2 inches above the surrounding ground**.
3. **Refill the hole half way** with your soil mix from beside the hole.
4. **When the hole is half full**, sprinkle soil additives (1 tablespoon each of fertilizer, Soil Moist, and ironite) all around the roots of the tree out to the edge of the hole but *not* on top of the root ball.
5. **Fill hole the rest of the way** with **soil mix** so it just covers the root ball and none of the root ball is still visible. The top of the root ball should still be sitting 1" – 2" above grade level at this point. Firm the dirt *gently* with your foot so air pockets are eliminated and make the top of the root ball is now level with the surrounding ground. Don't create a watering saucer.
6. **Apply 2 – 3 inches of shredded hardwood mulch** (not pine straw or nuggets) around the tree to conserve moisture, keep the soil temperature stable, and prevent weeds. Spread the mulch from the trunk out to the drip line and then pull it back a few inches from the trunk to avoid introducing insects or fungal growth.
7. Immediately after planting, **water thoroughly** but slowly, giving about a gallon of the **initial watering mix** per gallon of root ball size. To make initial watering mix, combine 1 capful of root starter and 4 oz Bayer Advanced per gallon of water..
8. **Staking** is usually not necessary for a small tree up to 3 feet tall, but if wind is a problem or the tree is taller, place a bamboo stake in the soil next to the trunk and secure the tree *loosely*, 2/3 of the way up the stem, so it can still sway several inches side to side. Remove stake and velcro tape after the first year.
9. **During the establishment period** of up to a year, water with plain water once a week *if you don't have rainfall that week*. Keep the soil uniformly moist -- not too wet or too dry.
10. **Continue HWA protection**. If you're using Bayer Advanced Tree & Shrub, retreat every year in the spring. If you're using Imidacloprid 75 WSP powder or 2F / 2L liquid, retreat every 5<sup>th</sup> year in the spring. Call 706-429-8010 for instructions.

