

# Potting Hemlock Saplings

## What You'll Need:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work gloves</li><li>• Trowel</li><li>• Small shovel &amp; large tub for mixing soil amendments</li><li>• Gallon jug for preparing initial watering mix</li><li>• Native soil from original growth site</li><li>• Mr. Natural Woodland Soil Mix</li><li>• Mr. Natural Worm Castings</li><li>• Nature's Care Compost</li><li>• Top soil</li><li>• Plastic pots of various sizes</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Espoma HollyTone (or any slow-release, acid-based fertilizer labeled for azaleas)</li><li>• Ironite granules</li><li>• Soil Moist for water retention</li><li>• Miracle-Gro Quick Start liquid</li><li>• Bayer Advanced Tree &amp; Shrub for 1-year protection against woolly adelgids</li><li>• Thin bamboo stakes pre-cut to sapling height + 6"</li><li>• Roll of velcro tape &amp; scissors</li><li>• Water source</li></ul> |
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**Sources:** See the [Contacts](#) page of our web site for sources of HWA Imidacloprid treatment products. You can get most of the other items at stores such as Home Depot, Lowe's, Walmart, hardware stores and garden centers. In Georgia, you can usually find Mr. Natural Woodland Soil Mix, Worm Castings, and Hen Manure at Leilani's Gardens in Dawsonville 706-265-3510, Anderson Feed and Supply in Dahlonega 706-864-3364, Ash Brothers Feed & Farm Supply in Cleveland 706-865-2124, and Little G's Garden Center in Cherry Log 706-273-2012. Elsewhere, check your local garden supply stores and on-line to see where they may be purchased. If you can't find Mr. Natural WSM, you can substitute MiracleGro Moisture Control, available at places like Home Depot, Lowe's, Ace Hardware, or Walmart. Call the Hemlock Help Line 706-429-8010 for information on substitutions.

*Note: Stores/products mentioned above are provided as suggestions only and are not meant as endorsements.*

## Preparing the Pots

If possible, prepare the pots before you dig the saplings so there will be minimal time for them to be out of the soil.

1. Inexpensive **plastic pots** work fine as long as they're clean and have drainage holes in the bottom. Choose the size of the pots according to the size of the saplings and their root balls. Here are some guidelines:

6" – 18" tall	1 gallon pot
18" – 30" tall	2 gallon pot
30" – 48" tall	3 gallon pot
More than 48" tall	5 gallon pot
2. Mix **special soil amendments** using equal parts of Woodland Soil Mix, Worm Castings, Nature's Care Compost, and top soil.
3. Combine the above special soil amendments with native soil from the original growth site in a ratio of 2/3 native soil to 1/3 special soil amendments.
4. **Pre-fill each pot** 1/3 full with the soil mixture from steps 2 and 3.
5. **Sprinkle 1 teaspoon each** of Soil Moist, HollyTone, and Ironite on top of the soil in the pot and mix thoroughly.
6. You can also prepare your **initial watering mix** in advance as long as you *keep it out of the sunlight* until you're ready to use it. For each gallon of water, add 1 capful of Quick Start liquid and 4 ounces of Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub.  
Note: Put the water in the container first; then add the other ingredients.

## Potting the Saplings

The key to successful hemlock potting is to be sure the tree ends up "at grade" in the pot, i.e., at the same level in the pot as it was originally growing in the ground.

1. **Insert a bamboo stake** into the center of the soil in the pot and place the sapling in the pot with its stem as close to the stake as possible. Spread the roots out evenly but gently.
2. **Add enough native soil / soil amendments mix** to just cover the roots plus 1/2 inch more and press down firmly using the backs of your gloved hands to eliminate any air pockets. The pot should be no more than 3/4 full at this point.



3. **Use a short length of Velcro tape** (about 4") to fasten the tree's main stem to the stake *loosely*, 2/3 of the way up the stem, leaving a couple inches of play in the loop. If the tree is 3' or taller, use a second piece of tape about 1/3 of the way up the stem.
4. **Water immediately but slowly**, giving 1 quart of the initial watering mix per gallon of pot size. The water should drain slowly through the soil in the pot.
5. Then place the **potted trees in the shade** or where they will at least have afternoon shade and be protected from the wind. Don't bring them indoors.
6. Two or three hours later, **inspect the potted trees** and add more soil amendment mix to cover the roots if the initial watering uncovered them. Press the dirt firmly down again so the little trees are now sitting at the same level in the dirt as where they were originally growing and water again gently with the initial watering mix.
7. During the establishment period of six months to a year, **water with plain water** once a week during any week that you don't have a good rainfall. Keep the soil uniformly moist -- not too wet or too dry. Use ½ gallon of water for each gallon of original root ball size.
8. **Maintaining stable moisture and temperature levels** is very important, especially during the heat of summer and the cold of winter, and the smaller the pot size the more critical this is. Banking some soil or shredded hardwood mulch around the pots up to the level of the dirt in the pot will provide this kind of protection.
9. **Giving additional fertilizer** after potting is usually not necessary, but if it seems necessary, wait at least 2 full seasons before doing so, and be sure to *follow the recommended dosage* on the product label as too much fertilizer can kill a plant.

**For more information:**

Call: Hemlock Help Line<sup>SM</sup> 706-429-8010

Visit: [www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org](http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org)