

The Ontario Native Tree Pre-Flight Checklist

Your Field Guide to Safe, Successful Backyard Landscaping

Phase 1: Site Assessment & Planning

Take this outside and measure your space.

- **Hardiness Zone Checked:** I have confirmed my exact Ontario Hardiness Zone (e.g., Zone 5b).
- **Soil Drainage Tested:** I have dug a small test hole, filled it with water, and timed the drainage to determine if my soil is heavy clay or sandy loam.
- **Sunlight Measured:** I have observed the planting spot to confirm if it gets Full Sun (6+ hrs), Partial Sun, or Deep Shade.
- **Spacing Verified:** The planting spot is at least **20 feet** away from my foundation (for large shade trees) or **10-15 feet** (for small ornamentals).
- **Canopy Clearance:** I have looked up to confirm there are NO overhead power lines within 15 feet of the planting spot.

Phase 2: Legal & Safety Compliance

Do not skip this step under any circumstances.

- **Ontario One Call Contacted:** I have requested a utility locate (Call 1-800-400-2255 or visit OntarioOneCall.ca).
- **Clearance Received:** I have received official confirmation that the digging area is 100% clear of gas, telecom, and hydro lines.

Phase 3: Nursery Run

Take this to the local nursery.

- **Species Match:** The tree I am buying matches my soil, sun, and spacing constraints identified in Phase 1.
- **Seed-Zone Certified:** I have asked the nursery staff to confirm the sapling was grown from local seed stock appropriate for my region.
- **Root Health Check:** The roots are not aggressively circling or girdling inside the pot.

Phase 4: Planting Execution

Keep this next to your shovel.

- **Hole Width:** Dig the hole 2 to 3 times wider than the root ball.
- **Hole Depth:** Dig the hole exactly the same depth as the root ball (no deeper).
- **Root Flare Visible:** The root flare (where the trunk widens into roots) is resting 1 to 2 inches *above* ground level.
- **Root Untangling:** I have gently loosened any tightly wound roots before placing the tree.
- **Mycorrhizal Fungi Added:** (Optional but recommended) I have added fungi inoculant to the roots.
- **Backfill:** Used the original native soil to fill the hole (no heavy synthetic fertilizers).
- **Deep Watering:** Watered the tree immediately with 10 to 15 gallons to remove underground air pockets.
- **Mulch Ring:** Applied 2-3 inches of mulch in a donut shape, keeping the mulch strictly 3 inches away from the trunk bark.