

# Planting to Encourage Proper Root Growth and Branching

*By Sue Flinders-Adams, Peterborough Master Gardener*

Here are a few tips to ensure that the new shrub or tree you just brought home will thrive and grow to its full potential.

1. Before planting, soak the plant in the pot, in a pail of water for a few hours or even overnight to hydrate the roots.
2. Carefully remove plant from the pot. If it doesn't come out easily gently press on the sides so that the roots will come away from the pot and tap on the bottom.
3. There are usually roots circling the pot – gently coax these roots away from the root ball to encourage outward growth. If roots are left in the 'circling' position, they will continue to grow in this direction, circling the plant and even girdling the trunk of the tree in 10 or 15 years.

4. The picture shows the roots that have been spread out in the very large hole. Partially cover the roots to hold them in place and water thoroughly with transplant fertilizer, according to the directions. Fill in the hole with the surrounding soil. Top dress with an inch or two of composted manure, and then 3 inches of mulch. Prune off any dead branches.



5. Branches are often cramped and a little twisted from shipping. Gently pull them away to a better position and secure with plant supports (pictured). In a couple of weeks you can take the supports away and the branches will continue to grow in that direction.



6. Three weeks later, the Black Lace Elder is looking very happy. It is October which explains the lack of new growth.

