

Q: I would like to plant a number of redwood trees. How do I best prepare the planting area?

A: Redwood, (*Sequoia sempervirens*), is one of the more popular landscape trees in this area. As with any tree, you need to take into consideration the kind of growing conditions that the tree requires in order to thrive. Many people think that because redwoods grow rapidly and are native to California that they will be good backyard trees, and in some situations they are. *Sequoia sempervirens* is a very large tree, with an extensive, shallow, root system. In its native habitat, summer fog occurs regularly, and the condensed moisture drips off the needles onto the ground beneath the canopy, providing regular moisture for the roots. In a home garden outside of the summer fog belt, irrigation will need to be provided for the life of the tree. Sequoias drop needles creating a thick blanket of insulating mulch. Homeowners may find the needles messy looking, but the shallow roots require that cover or an alternative. Sequoias are difficult to plant beneath, the shallow roots being competitive and dense. The dark needles do not allow much light through, creating deep shade as the plant grows.

If this is an appropriate tree for your garden, and you have ample water available, follow these planting instructions. Dig a planting hole slightly shallower than the depth of the root ball and 2-3 times as wide. The crown of the tree should be slightly above the soil surface. Amend the fill dirt with 20% decomposed organic material. Sequoias usually do not need to be staked, but if the trunk is thin and the tree bends over when planted, you may need several stakes for a year or so. Keeping a tree staked for longer than several years is not recommended. Do not add fertilizer at planting time. Cover the root zone area and several feet beyond with 3-4" of mulch. You will need to have irrigation in place, and a timer set to insure that the trees do not dry out. The trees need to be kept damp but not soggy, and the irrigation frequency is going to be dependant on your soil type and drainage. Irrigation will need to be provided except during the rainy months. These trees can grow as rapidly as three foot a year if the growing conditions are met.