

**Wahmhoff Farms Nursery**  
11121 M-40 Highway  
Gobles, MI 49055

Email: [sales@mitrees.com](mailto:sales@mitrees.com)



**Toll Free 1-888-MI-TREES**

Office: 269-628-4308

Fax: 269-628-7324

Website [www.mitrees.com](http://www.mitrees.com)

### **“Green Side Up”: How to Plant Conifer Seedlings and Transplants**

The “Green Side Up” seems obvious, and is meant as a joke, although more than once here on the tree farm, I have had trees planted upside down, with the roots sticking out of the ground. This has primarily been done when using a “pocket-type” tree planter, which actually puts the tree in the ground for you. If the tree is placed in the pocket upside down, the roots end up sticking out of the ground.

The most important thing in planting conifer seedlings and transplants is to have the roots going straight down into the ground without being curled up in the bottom of the hole. The ground also needs to be tightly packed around the roots to keep the air from drying them out. This can be accomplished in many different ways.

If planting small seedlings, and the quantity is not too great, you can use a shovel, or a planting bar to make the hole. Again, the important thing is to have the roots going straight down, and not curled up in the bottom of the hole. It is fine to cut the roots off to the depth of the hole to prevent them from curling up in the bottom of the hole. The roots will regrow rapidly after planting. We commonly trim the roots to 9 or 10 inches to prevent “J-rooting”. If the roots are “J-rooted”, the tree will be stunted. To this end, it is helpful to push the tree down in the hole beyond the planting depth, and then pull it back up to the proper depth, causing the roots to go straight down in the hole. When using a planting bar, you can then plunge the planting bar in the ground a couple more times, 3 inches and 6 inches away from the original hole to help loosen the soil and make it easier to pack it around the seedling. It is important to pack the soil tightly, while holding the seedling in a straight position.

If planting larger seedlings or transplants, it is desirable to use an auger to make the planting hole. We typically use a 6” auger, although even an 8” auger would work quite nicely. These can often be rented locally, or can be purchased from our “Grower Supply” catalog. The advantage of the auger should be obvious: it creates a larger hole to help get the roots going straight down in the soil. After making the hole, the tree can be inserted in the hole and the soil pushed back into the hole, helping to take the roots straight down into the hole. It is still important to trim the roots to the planting depth to prevent “J-rooting”. We then use a planting bar to loosen the surrounding soil and help to pack it tightly, same as above, while holding the seedling in a straight position.

**Additional questions? Wahmhoff Farms Nursery 1-888-MI-TREES**