Northern White Cedar Planting Guide

Cedars are popular landscaping trees because they are so versatile. They can be planted as “stand alone” focal points or used to create lush hedges that grow quickly and are winter tolerant. Here are some tips for getting your trees off to a strong start.

1. **Plant in the spring.** You want your trees to be well established before the onset of incessant summer heat. *If you’re planting a hedge*, calculate how many cedar trees you’ll need for them to grow into a good border. You’ll need to leave about 30 inches between each cedar. If you want to plant your hedge along the street, make sure you respect the distance from the pavement required by law.

2. **Dig a trench.** To plant a row of cedars, dig a trench about 30 inches wide by 15 inches deep.

3. **Improve the soil.** If your soil is porous and will allow for healthy root growth, you may not need to amend it at all. If your soil is poor, you may replace it with good topsoil with manure and bone meal or mycorrhizal fungi added to provide nutrients. Sandy or gravelly soil can be improved by adding sphagnum moss to help retain water and fertilizer. To determine the amount of each amendment required for your hedge, talk to the staff at a plant nursery or garden center.

4. **Plant your cedars.** Dig a hole that is deeper than the length of the roots. Put the roots down into the hole and then pull the tree up so that the original dirt line is level with the ground, adding soil to the bottom of the hole, if necessary. Make sure none of the roots are curled up in the bottom of the hole. Fill back in with soil and then gently tap down to get rid of all the air pockets.

5. **Water each tree** with about a quart of water. Frequent watering is important once your trees are planted. If it doesn’t rain, you should water your new hedge at least once a week for over an hour or so. Keep the soil moist, but not soaked. If your cedars change color, you may be watering them too much; if the leaves become dry and prickly, they’re not getting enough water. You can mulch around the trees to keep the weeds down and help with water retention. Just keep the mulch about an inch away from the trunk of the tree.

6. **Maintain your trees or hedges.** Most cedars don’t need winter protection. However, you’ll want to feed and prune them at the proper times. **Feeding** — Stop fertilizing them by the beginning of July, so they can properly channel their energy in anticipation of cold weather and **Pruning** — Trim your hedge at least once a year, between mid-June and late September. Trim it back on all sides if appropriate.

The South Portland Land Trust thanks Cedar Works of Maine for their assistance in making South Portland greener and healthier. A special thanks to you and your family for planting them!

Please Support the South Portland Land Trust

Every donation makes a difference. If you’d like to support the work that the SPLT does in South Portland to support trails and open space, please visit www.SouthPortlandLandTrust.org.