

RIVER CITY GARDENS
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HOMEOWNER INSTALLATION REMINDERS:

1. Before planting a garden call for underground utility line locates: Oregon Utility Notification Center at 811.
2. Select healthy plants. Examine the trunk of trees to determine that the bark is intact. Select plants that are in proportion to the pot size in which they are planted. If the plant is in a burlap ball, the ball should be firm and well tied. Check the plant for dead branches. *If this is a mystery to you take your landscape designer plant shopping with you.*
3. Soil preparation is the MOST IMPORTANT thing you do in the garden. The soil is alive with billions of microorganisms that convert leaves etc. into soil nutrients. To feed these ‘herds’ of organisms, organic matter needs to be added to soil. The surface of the soil accumulates organic matter – leaves, grass clippings, compost, twigs. This ‘natural’ compost can break down in place and add the needed organic matter to the soil. If you prefer a clean garden and remove the duff and leaves then add high quality compost to the soil once or twice a year. You can either dig compost into the soil or top-dress with 1-2” and let the earthworms and microorganisms mix it into the soil. Soils rich in organic matter hold water for the plants. Clay soils are nutritious but lack organic matter and do not drain well. Home-made compost is the best for your own garden.
New construction is hard on soil. The topsoil is often removed and the remaining soil is compacted with staging materials and heavy equipment. If you need to repair damaged soils have a serious conversation with your designer. You will need to add lots of compost, and organic fertilizers, till everything in, perhaps cover crop and have a compost tea application. This is the beginning of a lifetime of feeding your soil organic matter and nutrients.
Compost Teas are recommended to boost the biological activity in the soil and are especially effective for new gardens and damaged soil.

Using chemicals is not recommended as it upsets the biological balance of the soil, compromises the health of the plants, poisons children and other living creatures.

4. **Planting** Have all plants fully watered before beginning to plant. If a plant is particularly dry soak the whole root ball in water until it is heavy with moisture. When digging a hole for a large plant dig the hole only as deep as the existing root ball. Water the hole before planting, more than once. Amend the hole around the plant with good compost, native soil and organic fertilizer. When planting have the crown of the plant slightly higher than the grade of your soil. The crown is where the roots meet the trunk/stems of the plant. If the soil or mulch is mounded above the crown onto the trunk it can kill the plant. Water everything well. Look at your plants daily to see if they are stressed and establish an adequate regular watering system.

5. **Erosion control / Mulching** Rain dropping on bare soil can cause erosion and soil movement. Wind over dry soil also removes topsoil making it airborne. The topsoil (upper 6-12" or so) is biologically active and should stay in place rather than washing into the street or blowing away. Using mulch (compost) on the soil will protect it from rain and wind damage. Plants also break the force of rain hitting the soil. So once your garden is growing the plants will protect the soil.

5. **Staging** refers to where you store all the components that are required for the garden installation. Determine where to put delivered soil/compost so that rain will not create runoff. The City requires that soil be removed from the street within 24 hours of delivery. Heavy materials shall not be stored on the roots of trees or on garden beds. Staging should be done so that is it logical in terms of the building of the garden. Consider security also as theft of plants is an ongoing problem.

6. **Concrete work and other material washout**

Concrete has lime in it and will affect the PH of the soil and any waterway it gets into. Hosing washout into the street is not acceptable. Remember everything that goes down the storm drain ends up in the creek/river/ocean.

QUESTIONS: Call Kathryn, River City Gardens 503 293-6114

