What are the advantages of planting bareroot trees?

- Reduced plastic waste: bareroot trees do not come in a pot
- Reduced fossil fuels and labor for shipping: groups of trees are bundled together and shipped in a cardboard box, without extra weight of pots and soil
- Minimal transplant shock: shipped dormant, bareroot trees have not yet leafed out for the year so they are not losing water to transpiration as roots are establishing. Trees leaf out in synch with the onset of spring.
- Superior rooting: without excess potting soil, roots eagerly find contact with garden soil so trees establish more quickly. Circling and girdling roots due to pot culture are avoided.
- Easy to plant: no need to wrestle with a heavy pot, and the root flare on a bareroot tree is easy to identify to achieve the proper planting height
- Value: you are paying only for the tree, not the pot and the soil!

Where did these trees come from?

We sourced the trees from Bailey Nurseries. The trees are grown and shipped from their facility near Minneapolis. Many of the tree descriptions make reference to Minnesota, which has a renowned fruit breeding program through the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Since the trees were grown in Minnesota they will have excellent hardiness for our plant zone in Wisconsin.

How big are the trees when they arrive?

Expect your trees to be between 4’ and 6’ tall, with a trunk diameter between ¾ an one inch and several small side branches already developed.

How big will my trees get?

Sizes are listed in the descriptions of individual tree varieties. The apples are all grafted onto a Malling 7A semi-dwarfing rootstock, which (among other benefits) produces trees that are smaller than ungrafted apple trees. These trees are good for smaller urban and suburban lots, reaching approximately 12-15’ tall and wide. The pears are also grafted on a semi-dwarfing rootstock (Oldhome x Farmingdale 333) to restrict size to approximately 15’ tall. Plums and peaches are ungrafted; size is listed in plant description.

When will I get fruit?!

The pollination requirement is important to know for the trees you are considering. Many fruit trees, including apples, pears, and plums, require a second tree of a different variety planted within 50 feet and blooming at the same time for cross-pollination and good fruit set.

For example, if you’re considering the ‘Fireside’ apple, you will need another apple tree that blooms mid-late season (such as ‘Freedom’) planted nearby to get fruit on both trees. Existing crabapples or apple trees in your yard or in a nearby neighbor’s yard can serve as pollinators as long as they bloom at roughly the same time.

Information about bloom date and recommended tree pairings is listed in the bloom date/pollinator requirement column with the tree descriptions. The ‘Polly’ peach is self-fruitful meaning you only need one tree to get fruit.

Most trees will start to bear initial light crops of fruit 2-3 years after planting with fruiting increasing thereafter.
What happens if I can’t plant my tree right away?

Planting is recommended ASAP after trees arrive so plan your planting locations ahead of time! Bareroot trees are not bothered by potential frost or precipitation. If you absolutely must wait to plant, wrap some damp newspaper around the tree’s roots and enclose in a plastic bag to keep roots moist. Keep the tree in a cool and shaded location – 50 degrees or less – for no more than a few days prior to planting. Alternatively, the root system can be loosely heeled in to a pile of damp mulch if planting needs to be delayed by a few days. Planting upon arrival is always preferred.

I’ve never planted a bareroot tree before – I’m excited and a little nervous! What do I do?

Bareroot tree planting is easy if you pay attention to a few simple parameters such as digging the right size hole, situating the tree at the proper height to match the root flare and the soil grade, and some other simple tips. Please watch our video tutorial for complete instructions.

Additional questions? Mike Gibson, Olbrich’s Program Specialist – mvgibson2@cityofmadison.com