

Chatham County

Land Disturbing Activities Manual



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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to establish specific technical regulations, standards, and specifications necessary to implement the Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance of Chatham County, Georgia. The manual acts only as a guide. The guidelines and illustrations included within this manual are intended to help development professionals and property owners better understand tree preservation requirements. This is a living document and is subject to change.

The Chatham County Development Services Manager shall maintain the manual.

METHODS OF TREE PROTECTION

Applicable Standards

- a. Chatham County Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO)
- b. American National Standards for Tree Care Operations, ANSI A300.
American National Standards Institute, 11 West 42nd Street, New York, N.Y.
10036.ANSI A300 Tree Care Standards

Planning Standards

The most critical factor in tree protection throughout the development process is tree space. The root system of a tree can extend beyond the dripline of the tree canopy and is primarily found in the top few inches of soil. Disturbance within this critical root zone can directly affect a tree's chances for survival and stability. To protect these critical root zones, the following standards shall apply.

1. The minimum Critical Root Zone (CRZ), except for palm-type trees, shall be a 1-foot radius per 1-inch tree diameter measured at breast height (DBH). Palm-type trees shall have a minimum CRZ diameter equivalent to the diameter of the leaf crown.
2. If more than one tree is included in one preserved area, the total minimum preserved area shall include the minimum CRZ for each tree in the preserved area.
4. Layout of the project site utility and grading plans should accommodate the required CRZ. Utilities must be placed along corridors between tree protection zones. Utilities shall not be placed in critical root zones or tree save areas.
5. Construction site activities such as parking, material storage, concrete washout, etc., shall be kept out of the CRZ.

Tree Protection Procedures

1. Tree protection shall adhere to the following standards specified in:
 - a. Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO) of Chatham County
 - b. Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO) Compliance Manual of Chatham County

2. A Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) shall be specified around all trees, shrubs, and other plants, and soil areas designated for retention and protection. The TPZ shall include the CRZ for retained trees or the planting space standards (see Chatham County Approved Tree List) for newly planted trees and all other landscaping.
3. The tree protection device (unless directed otherwise by the Chatham County Arborist) shall be a 6' temporary chain link fence constructed at and around the perimeter of the Critical Root Zone (CRZ). The fence shall be attached to galvanized metal posts, spaced no farther than 8' apart. Signs shall be posted on each gate to alert about the protected status of the TPZ.
4. Tree protection devices shall be erected prior to the start of construction and shall remain in place until all site and exterior building work is completed and landscape installation has begun. Broken or dislodged tree protection devices shall be immediately repaired.
5. All designated Tree Protection Zones must be protected from the sedimentation of erosion material.
6. Silt fencing shall be placed along the outer uphill edge of Tree Protection Zones at the land disturbance interface.
7. No parked vehicles, stored construction material, or substances poured, disposed of, or placed within any Tree Protection Zone at any time during clearing or construction of the project.
8. No change in grade within the Tree Protection Zone shall be allowed around existing trees except for a maximum additional of two inches of mulch unless approved by Chatham County Arborist.
9. Trees within a Tree Protection Zone shall not be pruned or removed without prior knowledge and consent from the Chatham County Arborist.
10. All retained or planted trees shall be protected or situated to prevent damage from environmental changes or land disturbance resulting from any building or facility construction within or immediately adjacent to the Critical Root Zone of the tree(s).
11. Any damage or injury to trees shall be reported immediately to the Chatham County Arborist.

PLANTING AND TREE CARE

Planting Standards

1. All planting shall adhere to the following standards as specified in:

- a. Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO) of Chatham County.
- b. Land-Disturbing Activities Ordinance (LDAO) Compliance Manual of Chatham County.

2. Plants shall be true to species and variety specified, and nursery-grown in accordance with good horticultural practices.
3. Any deviation from these plans in either species or layout must be specifically approved by the Chatham County Arborist.
4. Plants shall conform to the measurements specified on the approved plan(s).
5. Contractors are responsible for inspection of existing conditions and must promptly report any discrepancies.
6. No large or medium tree species shall be planted within 10-feet of any underground utility or foundation and shall not be planted underneath any overhead power lines. Small tree species must maintain a minimum 5-foot separation from underground utilities or foundation.
7. All trees shall be healthy, vigorous, with a normal habit of growth, even distribution of branches, a straight trunk which exhibits good trunk taper, with limbs not lower than four feet above the ground (dependent upon the species), and shall be free from disease, insect infestation, mechanical injury, girdling roots, or other objectionable features that would cause the tree to decline or become structurally unsound. Trees shall be well-branched and densely foliated when in leaf.
8. Plants shall be subject to inspection for conformity to specifications requirements and approval by the Chatham County Arborists. Such approval shall not impair the right of inspection and rejection during progress of the work. Acceptance at the nursery, in which the plant is growing, prior to transplanting, does not preclude rejection at the site for just cause.
9. Tree shall be planted at proper depth or shall be rejected at time of inspection.
10. Stake trees only when necessary. Staking and guying shall follow the Chatham County specifications when used. Bamboo nursery stakes shall be removed at time of planting.

Planting Procedures

1. The root flare shall be at or just above the surrounding grade
2. Synthetic burlap or plastic shall be removed from entire root ball before planting

3. The upper 1/4 - 1/3 of natural burlap or wire basket shall be removed from root ball when planting
4. Mulch shall be applied to surface of soil surrounding the tree at a maximum layer of 2 inches
5. Keep mulch away from base of trunk
6. Staking or guying shall be used if tree needs extra support to stay upright
7. Stakes and guys shall be adjusted as needed to prevent girdling and removed after one-year
8. Bamboo sticks or metal rods used as support in the nursery shall be removed when planted
9. Irrigation shall be installed
10. Newly planted trees shall be healthy and shall not have any damage, therefore handle trees with care while transporting and planting

Irrigation & Drainage

One of the most important tree maintenance procedures following construction damage is to

maintain an adequate, but not excessive supply of water to the root zone.

- The availability of water to trees on construction sites should be monitored
- Newly planted trees require frequent watering to keep root ball moist. Irrigation systems must be properly designed for trees.
- A slow, long soak over the entire root zone is preferred
- Keep the top 12 inches of soil moist but avoid over watering
- If grade changes or excessive rains cause water to accumulate near trees where this was not the case before construction, steps must be taken to improve drainage with approval from Chatham County Arborist.

Root Management

1. Cuts should result in a smooth surface
2. Soil excavation to expose roots prior to pruning shall be done by air spading

Buffers

The Chatham County Zoning Ordinance (Section 3-12 Visual Buffers and Screening) identifies the buffer type required for a given development based on its land use and land use of the adjacent property, as well as the minimum standards for the various buffer types.

The following figures contain general planting designs for each buffer type per 100 linear feet of buffer. The standards for plant spacing and type vary, thus the specific designs of each project will be reviewed for approval during the plan review process.

**Figure 1. Type A Buffer Planting
Fence OR Shrubs**

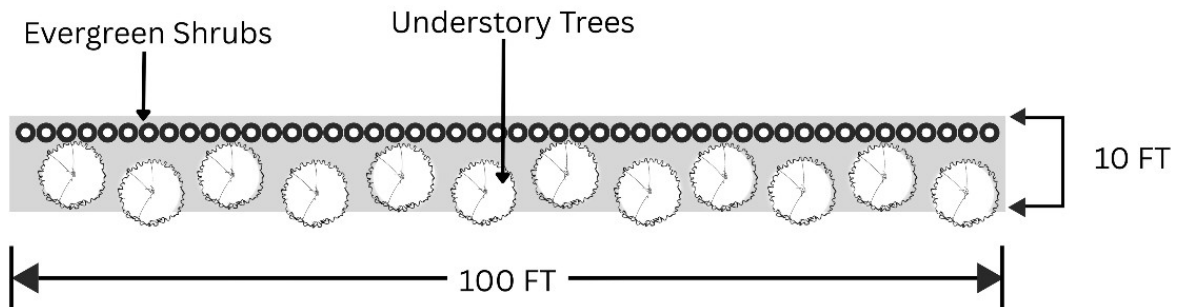
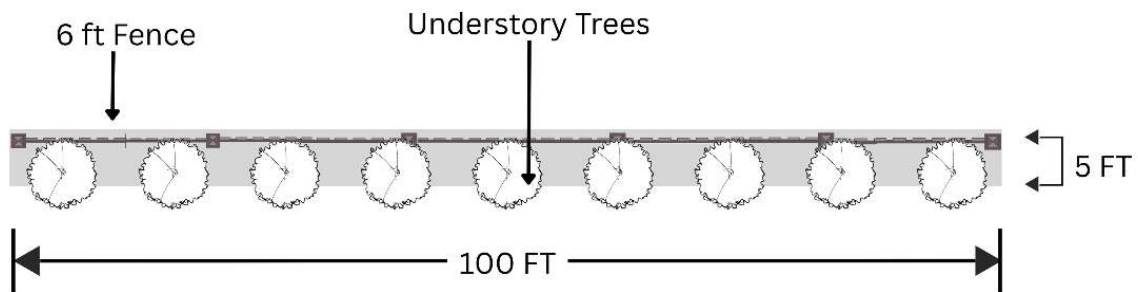


Figure 2. Type B Buffer Planting Standards

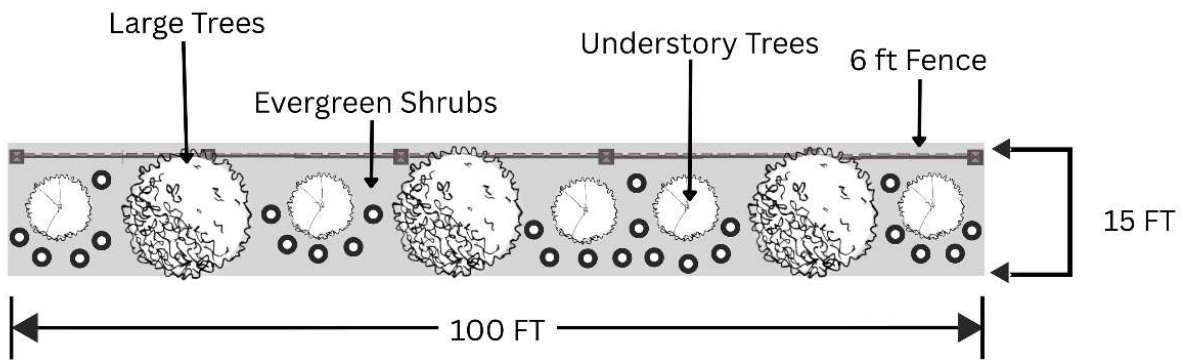


Figure 3. Type C Buffer Planting Standards

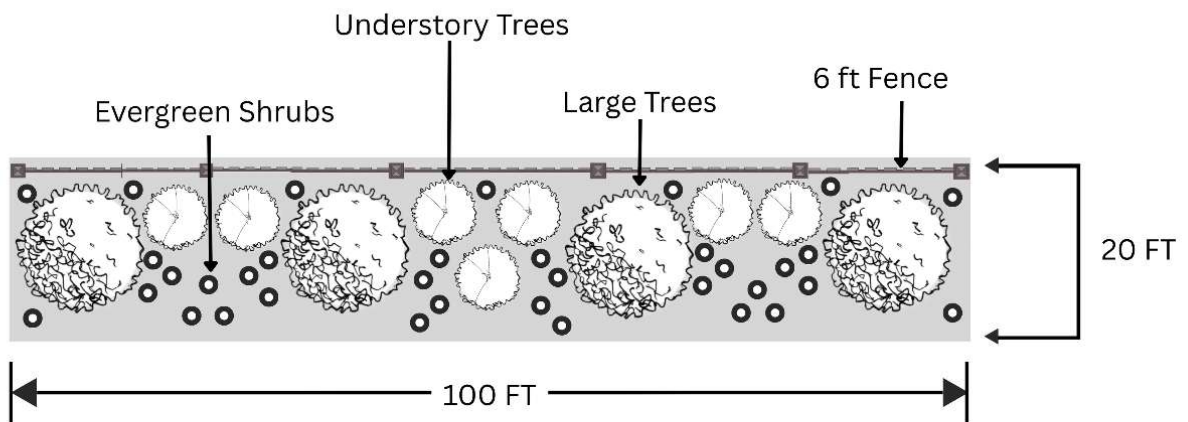


Figure 4. Type D Buffer Planting Standards

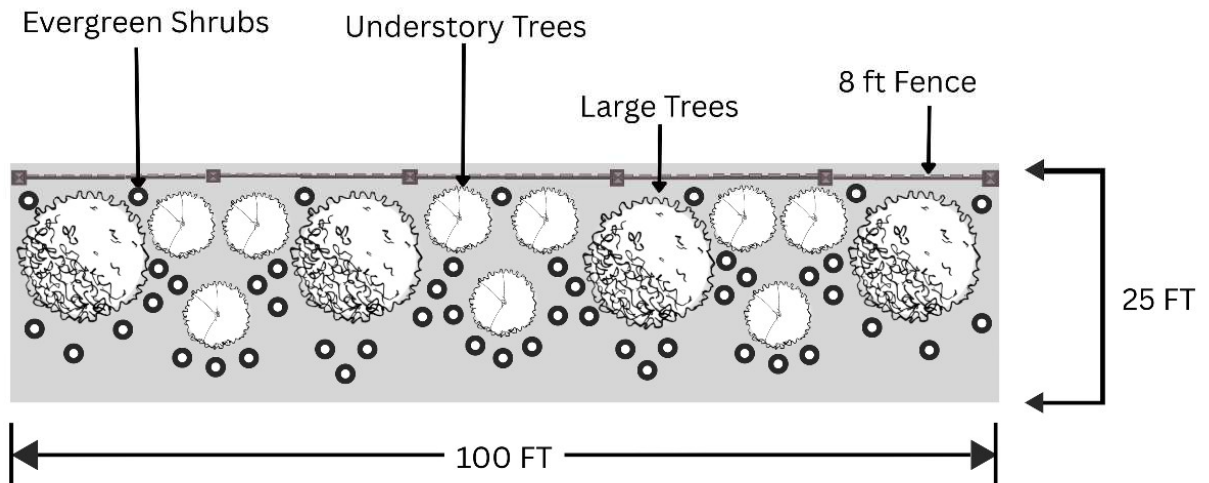
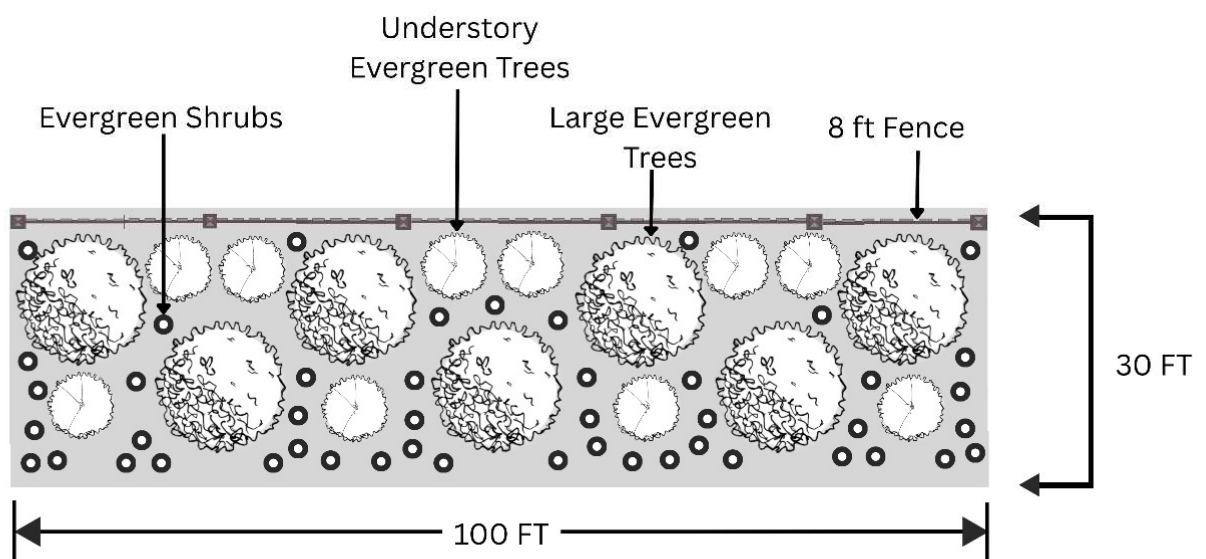
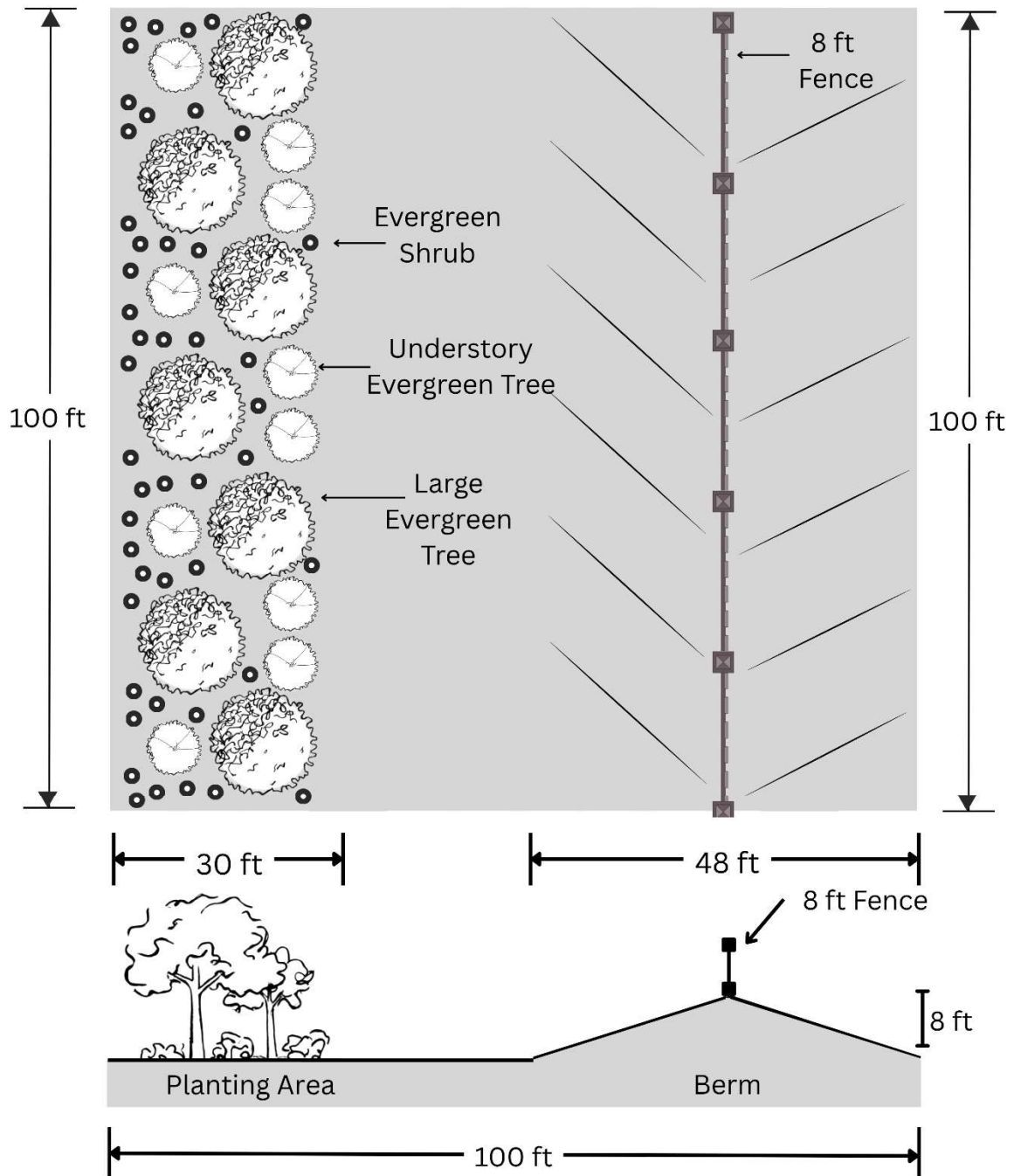


Figure 5. Type E & F* Buffer Planting Standards

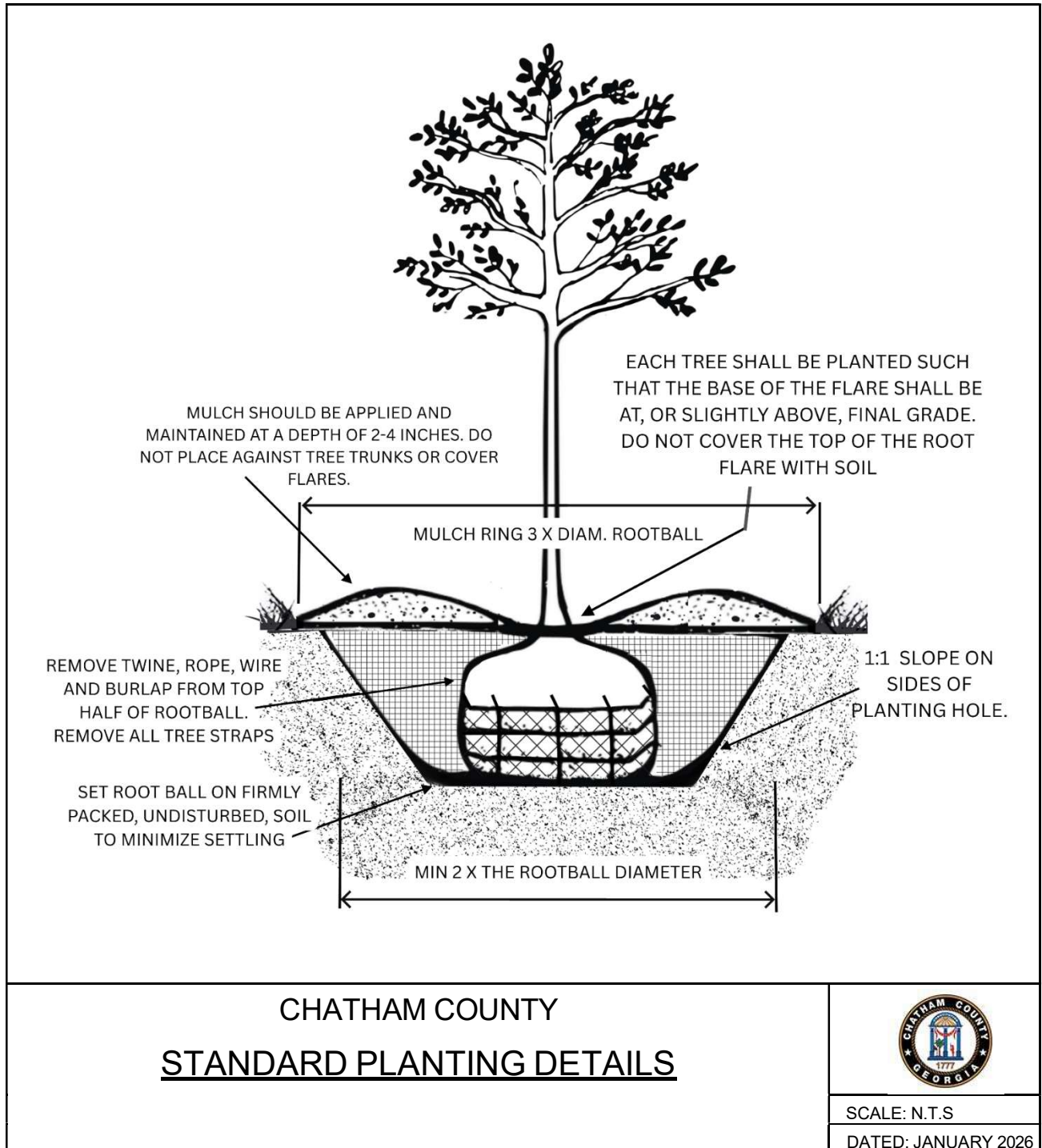
**See Figure 6 for Type F adjacent to Residential*

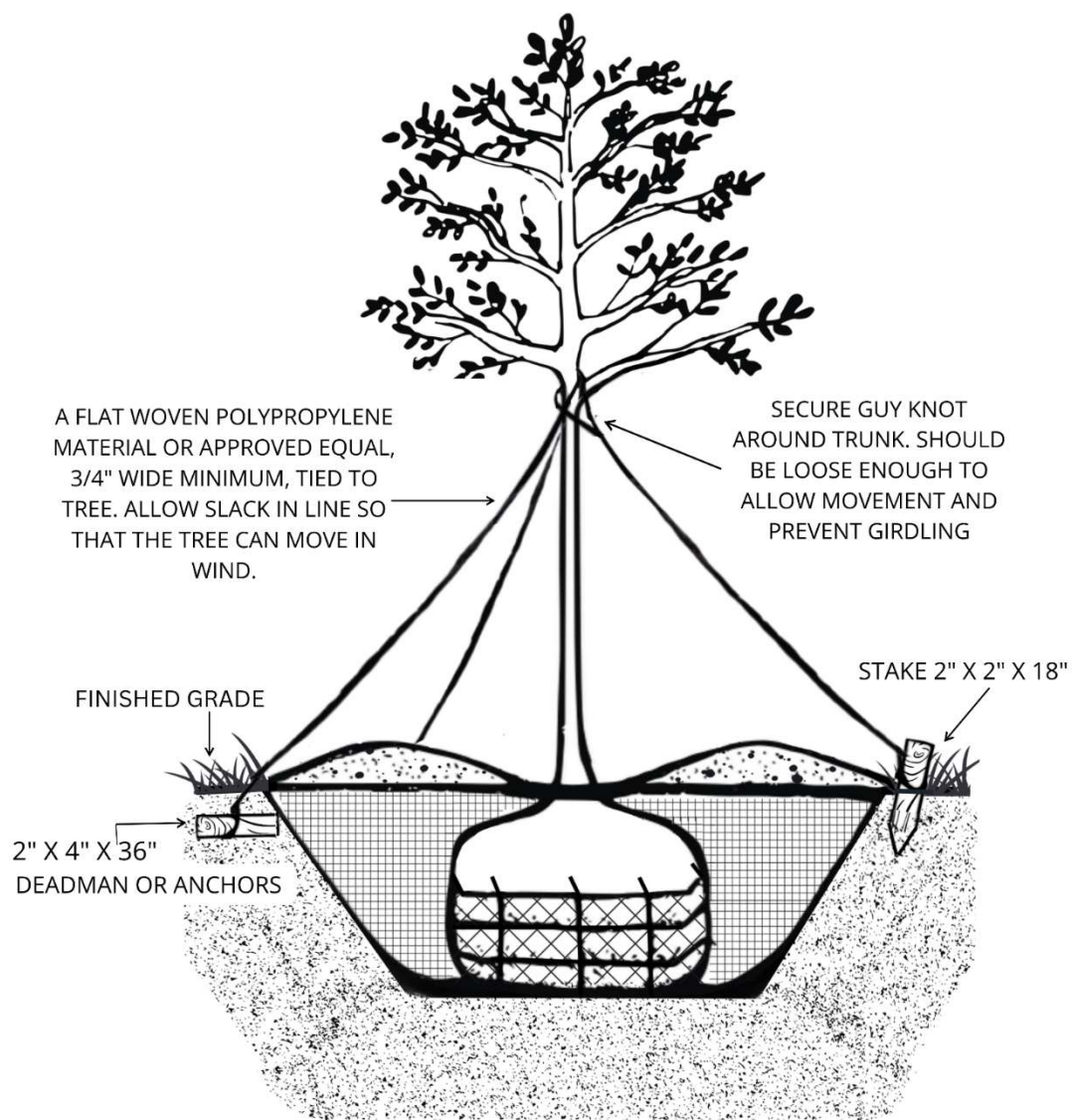


**Figure 6. Type F Buffer Planting Standards
per Chatham County Zoning Ordinance Sec 3-12.6 D**



Planting and Protection Figures



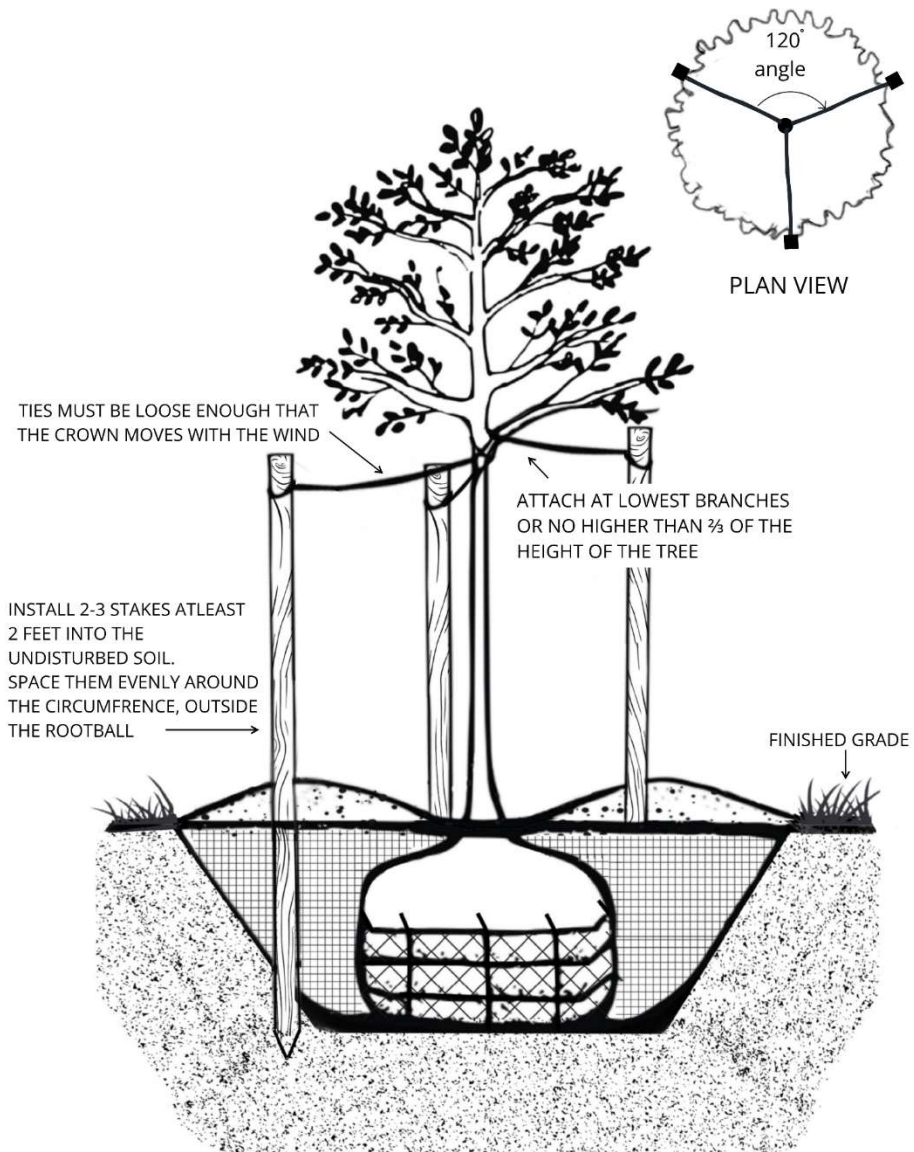


CHATHAM COUNTY
STANDARD PLANTING DETAILS
TREE GUYING



SCALE: N.T.S

DATED: JANUARY 2026



CHATHAM COUNTY
STANDARD PLANTING DETAILS
TREE STAKING



SCALE: N.T.S

DATED: JANUARY 2026

SIGN SHOULD BE POSTED ON FENCE TO ALERT EQUIPMENT OPERATORS AND CONTRACTORS ABOUT THE PROTECTED STATUS OF THE TREE PROTECTION ZONE.

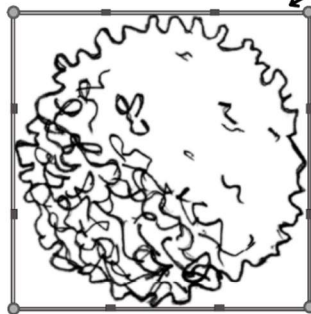
6' TEMPORARY CHAIN LINK FENCE TREE PROTECTION BARRIER

KEEP OUT TREE PROTECTION AREA

GALVANIZED METAL POST SUNK A MINIMUM 1 FOOT BELOW GRADE OR FENCING SHOULD BE ANCHORED BY WEIGHTS

NO EXCAVATION, TRENCHING, TILLING, GRUBBING, VEHICLE OR EQUIPMENT STORAGE WITHIN THE LIMITS OF TREE PROTECTION FENCING.

6' TEMPORARY CHAIN LINK FENCE TREE PROTECTION BARRIER



BARRIER CONSTRUCTED TO PROTECT TREE TRUNK, CROWN, AND ROOT SYSTEM FROM INJURY. BARRIERS SHALL BE LOCATED AT THE LIMITS OF THE TREE'S CRITICAL ROOT ZONE (RADIUS OF 1 FOOT PER INCH OF THE TREES DIAMETER AT BREAST HEIGHT). BARRIER SHALL BE KEPT IN GOOD CONDITION FOR THE DURATION OF THE PROJECT AND TO REMAIN IN PLACE UNTIL REMOVAL IS APPROVED BY COUNTY ARBORIST.

CHATHAM COUNTY
STANDARD CONSTRUCTION DETAILS
TREE PROTECTION



SCALE: N.T.S

DATED: JANUARY 2026