I Dig Trees has been created by OVO Energy in partnership with The Conservation Volunteers. OVO is on a journey with their members to reach zero carbon living. On behalf of OVO members with green upgrades, we’ve helped plant over 700,000 carbon-busting trees since 2015. And by the end of 2019 we are set to reach an amazing milestone - 1 million trees planted up and down the UK.

A. Unpacking and checking the plants
1. Check that the species, plant numbers and height of plants are correct.
2. Check that the roots are damp and in good order. The root structure of species can vary between
3. Check that the plant stems are in a healthy and fresh condition and not dried out or brittle. Remember that the plants are currently in a
4. For reassurance you can scrape back the stem green underneath the bark. This represents a healthy plant.
5. Check the plant as a whole to make sure no roots or stems have been broken or damaged during transit.

B. How to look after your plants upon receiving them
All trees and hedging plants should be planted within one week of delivery. The plants can be ‘heeled in’ immediately or alternatively will remain healthy in their bags for up to 7 days.

Make sure the bags containing the plants are stored in a cool building overnight and are kept out of the elements. Any overnight frost contact with the bags can be damaging to the plants. If you are unable to plant them within this time period, we recommend that you ‘heel’ your plants into the ground for safe storage and to prevent the health of your plants degrading. ‘Heeled in’ plants will store happily throughout the winter period until you are ready to plant them.

C. Temporarily heeling your plants in
1. Start by digging a V-shaped trench, wide enough and deep enough to hold the roots of the plants you are to heel in. Remove the plants from any packaging and place them at an angle in the trench in their bundles, so that the roots are at the bottom and the trunk or base of the plant rests up the side of the trench.
2. Check that the species, plant numbers and height of plants are correct.
3. Water the plants once in position. They will stay there quite happily throughout the winter period. Do not remove or try to plant during frost or snow conditions. Be wary of leaving plants degrading. ‘Heeled in’ plants will store happily throughout the winter period until you are ready to plant them.

D. Removing heeled in plants
1. When you are ready to relocate the plants to their permanent position, gently remove and loosen the soil accidentally damaging the roots. When you feel the bundles becoming loose then pull from the ground
2. If the roots have remained damp, then place your plants within a planting bag in readiness for planting. Alternatively, it wouldn’t harm to give them a ‘drink’ prior to planting. Fill a bucket with water and place the plant roots within. Allow them to soak for 5–10 min

For more help on planting trees visit tcv.org.uk/plantingtrees

E. Planting your trees and hedging
DO NOT PLANT IF THE GROUND IS FROZEN OR WATERLOGGED. Planting your plants is an easy task, as bare-rooted plants can be notch-planted. Here’s how:

1. If not already decided upon, find a suitable position for your plants, bearing in mind future growth and potential height x spread at maturity.
2. Begin by inserting the blade of a spade into the ground, push the spade handle away from you and then bring it back towards you. Once you remove the spade, you will see that you have created a cavity in the ground.
3. Place the plant roots within the cavity and shake to ensure that all of the roots are pointing downwards.
4. Use your heel to firm the soil around the plant to remove any air pockets. Once planted, give them a good watering to aid recovery.

F. Fitting plant protection & recycling
Plant protection should be securely fitted following planting. Firstly, secure the cane or stake next to the planted plant, then follow up and fit the spiral guard as the final task. Spirals should be placed over both the plant and the cane – the only purpose of the cane is to hold the spiral up. Netguards should be held up with two canes in opposite corners of the guard.

The plastic spirals supplied with our trees provide a very important role in protecting your young trees from rabbits, strimming and mowing. As the trees mature they become less dependent on the spiral guards for protection (typically from 3 years). When your trees no longer require the spiral guards, please remove and ensure they are recycled to continue protecting our community green spaces.

G. Maintaining your plants
To increase prospects for survival and subsequent growth rate, the implementation of a maintenance programme is essential. Lack of weeding is the biggest single killer of young planted trees. It is far cheaper to weed than to replace dead trees. Weeded trees establish faster and need less maintenance overall.

However, when planting bare-root stock, it is not unusual for natural losses to occur so always budget for a small percentage of failures to be replaced in

You must eradicate weed competition at the base of plants for the be done by chemical means or by hand weeding.

Find out more at ovoenergy.com/i-dig-trees
Got a question about tree packs or planting? Email idt@tcv.org.uk or visit tcv.org.uk/idigtrees

H. Maintaining plants with protection fitted
If you have protection on the plants, you can safely appropriate herbicides, without risk of chemicals touching the plants. Check at least twice a year that where necessary. Protection should be maintained for at least 3 years.

Follow and share your tree planting activities at #IDigTrees