

IFAS Extension - University of Florida

Maximum Tree Size at Planting Depends on Several Criteria

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/maximum-size.shtml>

Key Points

- Irrigation capacity:
 - Choose tree size based on ability to provide adequate watering after planting
 - Planting trees too large for available irrigation increases mortality
 - If irrigation is limited, select smaller trees
- Handling and logistics:
 - Tree size should match what can be safely transported and planted without damage

Benefits of Small Trees

- Comparable long-term growth:
 - Small trees can reach the same size as larger trees within a few years.
- Faster establishment:
 - Require shorter irrigation periods
 - Become wind-firm sooner
- Lower cost and more plantings per budget
- Better suited for compacted or poorly drained soils

Considerations for Wet or Poorly Drained Sites

- Large trees:
 - Risk root submergence and root death
 - Often poorly suited for wet soils
- If large trees must be used:
 - Plant on mounds to keep roots above water

Small vs. Large Trees

- Small trees:
 - Quick establishment
 - Short irrigation period
 - Lower cost
- Large trees:
 - Slow establishment
 - Longer irrigation needs
 - More expensive

IFAS Recommendation: Tree size at planting should match irrigation capacity, site drainage, and maintenance resources; smaller trees often survive and establish more successfully.



January 5th, 2023
BPNA 25-gallon Green Buttonwood



February 12th, 2026
BPNA 25-gallon Green Buttonwood



February 17th, 2025
SmartyPlants 25-gallon
Green Buttonwood