

Quick-Start-Trees™ Planting and Care Guide

Our Sierra Gold Nurseries Quick-Start-Trees™ represent a significant nursery innovation as they shorten our timeline to propagate a finished budded tree. It is the perfect option for growers wanting to make last-minute decisions on cultivar/-rootstock combinations. Please be aware, utilizing this new system takes some adjusting of both your farming techniques and your expectations to make it perform to its highest potential.



1

THIS IS WHAT A BIODEGRADABLE AND PLANTABLE CONTAINER SYSTEM LOOKS LIKE! The containers that hold your young tree are supposed to look “natural”, a little rough and uneven. Don’t be concerned. The Quick-Start-Trees™ system is based on the Ellepot™ which uses a biodegradable membrane that is engineered to let roots easily grow through it and to quickly breakdown in your orchard soil. More than 2 Billion plants are grown and planted in the Ellepot™ system across the globe every year on every continent except Antarctica, and each Ellepot™ is a little different in shape and size by the time you receive it. The membrane is surprisingly strong, however, and these will not fall apart during planting—not to mention that thousands of roots are holding it all together. Nevertheless, you should expect to see several things that are inherent to the system. Harmless mosses sometimes grow on the surface of the Ellepot™ membrane and potting mix in the greenhouse, and these will immediately die upon being exposed to your orchard conditions. Also, the biodegradable membrane can look a little ragged or have a small rip here or there. This is all part of what it means to be using a growing system that is geared around efficiency and sound horticultural principals.

2

THESE ARE GREEN GROWING PLANTS. And they are smaller than what you may be used to (18”-24” tall + the container). While they are packaged to take the harsh conditions of shipping and planting, they are not as tough as traditional dormant bare root trees. So just a little extra care is needed to make sure no damage is done to the tree at time of unloading or planting.

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WHEN TREES ARRIVE - EXTRA CARE REQUIRED Prepare a secure area to unload trees off truck. These trees will arrive loaded on wooden delivery pallets, with 3 layers of 256 trees per layer...for a total of 768 trees per pallet. The trees will be bagged 16 trees per bag. When truck arrives have a small crew available to help unload. Pallets should be forklifted off trailer for easier unloading of trees. Bags are best handled at corners. Immediately water trees in bags.



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FERTILIZER While Sierra Gold cannot make specific fertilizer recommendations, it is important that you start feeding your Quick-Start-Trees™ immediately upon planting. These are actively growing plants with functioning leaves and functioning roots. Without optimal nutrition your plants won’t grow as quickly as they could. Unlike a brand new bareroot tree which has stored carbohydrates and can grow without fertilizer for the first month or six weeks, Quick-Start-Trees™ require a constant feeding program for the first couple months to perform at their best. Please consult your local fertilizer expert for a specific nutritional plan. Fertilizing through your drip the same day you plant is not too early!

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THE TREE IS NOT A HANDLE! Please always handle the Ellepot™ (*this is the biodegradable container system*) and not the trunk of the tree. Damage to both the bud union and to the root system could occur.

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QUICK-START-TREES™ PERFORM SO WELL AS A GREEN GROWING PLANT IN THE SPRING because of the biodegradable membrane that holds the soilless media together while letting the roots of the plant burst right through (See picture at top of page) the membrane and into your native soil by the hundreds. This will happen in the first week if proper care of the plant occurs as detailed below.



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ALWAYS KEEP THE POTTING MIX DAMP. Monitor plants often before planting. If the potting mix starts to get a little dry, water them with a hose and watering wand or a sprinkler or anything. Just like keeping plants from your local garden center moist before planting. Especially important is to make sure the plants are at maximum moisture just prior to planting. Water the plants as they go out in batches to be planted. We will water them thoroughly just before they go on the truck to be delivered, so they should show up in great condition. But every delivery is different, so please check the moisture of the Ellepot™ as soon as the product is unloaded!

8

IT IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO IRRIGATE THE SAME DAY AS PLANTING TO SETTLE THE SOIL AND GET THE ROOTS GROWING OUT INTO YOUR FIELD. Don't worry, you won't over irrigate them the first day.

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NOTHING REPLACES DIRECTLY CHECKING THE POTTING MIX FOR MOISTURE AFTER PLANTING. We call this the "finger test". The first couple weeks after planting check randomly selected and always different plants in the field by digging down a few inches and seeing if the potting mix is nice and moist in the middle of the Ellepot™. Remember, most of the roots are still in the potting mix the first couple weeks.



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POTTING MIX WILL OFTEN BE BONE DRY WHILE FIELD SOIL RIGHT NEXT TO IT IS STILL MOIST. Do not check your field soil the first couple weeks, rather check the potting mix itself, as indicated above. We find the best way to keep any potting mix moist is with short but frequent irrigations of your drip, microjets, sprinklers, etc.

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AT THE SAME TIME, JUST IRRIGATING EVERY DAY FOR 2 WEEKS CAN BE A PROBLEM. In some soils, just running drip every day can be too much and over saturate the trees, inhibiting root growth. Monitor the potting mix and irrigate when your common sense says that the potting mix is starting to dry down just a little bit.

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GENERALLY, AFTER A FEW WEEKS, HUNDREDS OF ROOTS ARE GROWING IN YOUR SOIL AND YOU CAN IRRIGATE, FERTILIZE, AND FARM THESE TREES LIKE ANY YOUNG TREE. In fact, because these Quick-Start-Trees™ aren't suffering from transplant shock, or 5 months in cold storage, or huge woody tops and almost no roots in the soil, after the initial establishment stage (which isn't very difficult as you can see above), these plants become easier to manage. They will be growing fast and in balance, and a plant like that is the easiest to know how to irrigate and feed.

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AS WITH ANY YOUNG NURSERY TREE, HERBICIDE DAMAGE FROM PRE-EMERGENTS AND SYSTEMIC MATERIALS IS A CONCERN. Enough said. Most growers choose to grow a Quick-Start-Tree™ either in a paper tree protector or a plastic Grow Tube that acts both as a mini-greenhouse and a spray protector. Nevertheless, we suggest like almost all other nurseries that you don't use systemic herbicides like Roundup near your trees the first year in the orchard.

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TAKE EXTRA CARE NOT TO SNAP OFF THE TIP OF THE TREE. We provide a small bamboo stake as protection, but it is important to be aware of keeping the terminal bud intact during the planting process, and especially when placing a protective sleeve of any type over the tree. These trees are tough, and one broken terminal every thousand trees won't be noticeable. Please just make sure crews are taking time not to bend over and snap off every tip of every tree.

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PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR RAPIDLY GROWING TREE! If you are utilizing a trellis system and you will continue to let the terminal of your tree grow, the rapidly growing trunk will need support. So if your trellis is not yet in place, please immediately place a larger bamboo next to the tree to support it. If creating a multi-leader tree, this will not be necessary. Sierra Gold can supply stout bamboo stakes for this purpose upon request.