

Mounding Avocado Trees: Soil Preparation prior to planting

Here is some information that may be helpful in your preparation for trees. Watering is of the utmost importance. Be sure to review the later section on *Common Problems*.

Mounds can provide enhanced aeration for avocado roots and encourage a quick start for young trees. You should use native soil, free from pre-emergent herbicides. The mound should be incorporated or mixed into the floor of the orchard to eliminate any possibility of an interface that could inhibit water percolation. Build the mound 1 to 1 ½ feet high, at a 4:1 slope. The mound should be settled with water and allowed to dry out somewhat so you are not planting in muck. Dig a hole 18" in diameter and about 15" deep. Place the nursery tree in the hole to check planting height. The soil of the nursery ball should be about 1" above the top of the mound to keep the ball exposed to irrigation water. Cut and remove the bottomless container only after checking and adjusting the planting height. Backfill the tree little by little lightly tamping out air spaces. Do not overly compact the soil. Water the tree right away with 10 to 20 gallons of water to assure no air spaces remain around the root ball.

We've seen good results from capping off the mound with 15 to 35 lbs. of gypsum, and then cover the mound with coarse mulch about 4" to 6" thick. Be careful to keep the mulch from piling up around the trunk, it's best left exposed. The calcium in the gypsum inhibits the Phytophthora fungus and the mulch provides an ideal environment for shallow aerated roots to develop.

Trees should be treated every three months with a fungicide to control root rot until the trees are well established.