

## How to handle and install live stakes



Live stakes bundled for shipping

A few native tree and shrub species can root from stem cuttings planted directly into the ground. Woody cuttings of these species, harvested while dormant, are called live stakes. Each species has traits suited to particular sites. Scouler's willow tolerates drier soil but it roots less vigorously than other willows. Hooker's willow is common along marine shorelines. Geyer's willow prefers year-round saturated soils. Sitka willow is very versatile and is very common in western Washington. Pacific willow may develop into a large tree. Snowberry is a small woody shrub that tolerates dry soil and full sun or shade. Black cottonwood thrives in floodplains, and grows into a large tree. Red-osier dogwood live stakes give

inconsistent results, so we prefer planting them from container stock. Live stakes should be harvested and planted from mid-October to mid-March. They can be ordered from a grower or, if you have source plants growing on-site, you can harvest them yourself following these steps:

1. Cut off some straight branches about ½" – 1-½" in diameter. Upright branches make the best stakes.
2. Cut the branches about 3' long using sharp loppers. Cut the bottom at a pointed angle and the top flat to insure correct orientation and facilitate easy planting.
3. Prune off the leaves and side branches, angle the bottom.
4. Store live stakes in a shady place for no more than two weeks (less in hot weather), covered with damp burlap to keep them moist.



Note angled & flat ends

Planting live stakes is easy following a few simple steps:

1. Do not re-cut the stakes before planting.
2. For best success, soak live stakes in water for at least 48 hours before planting.
3. Plant stakes 1'-2' apart in a zigzag pattern.
4. Make a deep pilot hole with a piece of rebar, metal rod or planting tool.
5. Insert the stake with the angled end down; try to bury at least half of the stake in the soil.
6. Pound it in with a mallet or dead-blow hammer, and stomp down the ground around it to close up the soil.
7. If the top gets damaged during planting, prune it off with sharp loppers.



Make a pilot hole



Pound in the stake

Typically only about 60%-90% of live stakes survive, depending on a lot of factors. You may need to water live stakes for the first year, because they need moist soil, especially during root development in the spring and early summer. Early season drying is a common cause of live stake failure. Be very cautious not to cause any runoff when watering on a slope.



Dead-blow hammer is hollow, filled with lead shot, available from hardware stores