





# Planning, planting and protecting trees and energy infrastructure

Planting a tree takes some initial planning, educating and important safety measures to ensure the tree is all that it can be. Use the following tips to ensure your tree lives a long and healthy life.

## Planning Your Plant

Where you plant a tree is just as important as the tree you select. Planting a tall tree too close to a power line could result in the tree being regularly trimmed shorter than you would ever want or worse, being removed. Pick the right tree and the right place to avoid collisions with power lines, sidewalks, buildings and other trees.

1. **Get measurements.** When selecting a new tree or shrub, ask the tree nursery what the height and width will be once it's fully grown.
2. **Call 811.** Before digging, call 811 or visit [Call811.com](http://Call811.com) to have underground utility lines marked for free. Do this at least two business days before you are planning to plant.
3. **Look up.** If power lines are over the area where you want to plant, plan to plant roughly 20 feet away based on the mature size of your tree.
4. **Look down.** To be safe, plan to plant at least 25 feet away from the flags that indicate underground natural gas lines.
5. **Look around.** If there are any ground-level

transformers nearby, plan to plant at least 10 feet away from the front to ensure the transformer is accessible.

**TREE TIP:** If your tree's mature height is 20 feet – plant it at least 20 feet away from any nearby power lines.

## Planting Your Tree

Trees typically come in containers or pots, in burlap or bare root. Depending on the packaging, the roots of the tree will need to be loosened and untangled in case they have been growing in a circle. But you'll want to wait to do this until you have dug the hole and placed the tree in its spot, careful to carry the tree by the root ball.

1. **Dig the hole.** Dig a saucer-shaped hole with sloping sides that is two times the width of your tree's container and only as deep as the height of the root ball.
2. **Free your tree.** Carefully remove the container or cut the wire basket and remove the rope, twine and burlap.
3. **Set it straight.** Place the tree straight so the trunk flare, located at the base of the tree where the roots spread, is slightly visible above the ground.
4. **Add some soil.** Fill in the hole with previously removed soil, but only until the soil is just below the root collar.

5. **Water the tree.** Give the soil around the tree a good soaking to ensure it settles and there are no air pockets.

6. **Add mulch.** Keeping a 4-inch distance from the base of the tree, add about 2-4 inches of mulch on top of the backfilled soil.

**TREE TIP:** Don't forget to remove any tags or labels from your tree and trim any broken or dead branches.

## Protecting Your Tree

Properly maintaining your tree, especially as it relates to pruning, will help keep your tree healthy and structurally sound. Our Vegetation Management Team works year-round trimming trees away from power lines and transformers. Trees that grow into power lines are a major cause of electrical outages and fires. Here are some ways to protect yourself and your tree.

1. Plant the right tree in the right place, which means away from overhead and underground utility lines.
2. Never remove a fallen tree or branch from a power line. You could be seriously injured or killed.
3. If a tree or branch touches a power line, keep yourself and others away from the tree and call 911.

To learn more, visit [NorthWesternEnergy.com/trees](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com/trees).

# How to read your bill

When we get our energy bill every month, many of us only look at the amount due. However, your NorthWestern Energy bill contains much more information, and the more you know about your energy use, the better you'll be able to manage it.

Here are a few things to notice on your bill:

- The 13-month graph allows you to see how your energy use this billing cycle compares to recent months and to the same month one year ago.
- Look at the information under the graph to compare days of service, as this can fluctuate between cycles and can sometimes explain why a bill is higher or lower than normal.
- You can also compare average daily temperatures, listed below the bar graph. These can also help explain fluctuations in your bill.
- Delivery charges vs. supply service –
  - Energy delivery charges can be thought of as the cost to use the highways (pipes and wires) that deliver the energy from the generation source to the user. These charges are subject to regulation by the State Utility Commissions and, where appropriate, the Federal Regulatory Commission.
  - Supply service is the charge for the amount of electricity or natural gas you use. The supply may come from a variety of sources, some owned by NorthWestern Energy and others owned by third-party suppliers. This is a pass through cost, meaning whatever we pay for the energy is what our customers pay.
- Read the information in the Message Board area of the bill. It includes important information about rates and updates.

We also have a page on our website dedicated to explaining every item on your bill, everything from where to find your account number to how we calculate therms.

For more information, visit [NorthWesternEnergy.com/ReadYourBill](http://NorthWesternEnergy.com/ReadYourBill).