

# Potting Hemlock Saplings

## What You'll Need:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work gloves</li><li>• Trowel</li><li>• Small shovel &amp; large tub for mixing soil amendments</li><li>• Soil amendment (such as Mr. Natural Woodland Soil Mix, Nature Care Potting Soil, or MiracleGro Garden Soil)</li><li>• Extra nutrition (such as Mr. Natural Worm Castings, Hen Manure, or homemade compost) if available</li><li>• Slow-release fertilizer (such as Espoma HollyTone or any acid-based fertilizer labeled for azaleas, rhododendrons)</li><li>• Ironite granules</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Soil Moist or other water-saver crystals</li><li>• MiracleGro Quick Start liquid</li><li>• Bayer Advanced Tree &amp; Shrub for 1 year of HWA protection</li><li>• Plastic pots of various sizes</li><li>• Native soil from original growth site</li><li>• Thin bamboo stakes pre-cut to sapling height plus 6 inches</li><li>• Roll of velcro tape &amp; scissors</li><li>• Water &amp; 1 gallon jug</li></ul> |
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**Sources:** See the [Contacts](#) page of our web site for sources of HWA Imidacloprid treatment products. You can get most of the other items at stores such as Home Depot, Lowe's, Walmart, hardware stores and garden centers. In north Georgia, you can usually find Mr. Natural products at Anderson Feed and Supply in Dahlonega 706-864-3364, Ash Brothers Feed & Farm Supply in Cleveland 706-865-2124, and Little G's Garden Center in Cherry Log 706-273-2012.

*Note: Stores/products mentioned above are provided as suggestions only and are not meant as endorsements.*

## Preparing to Pot

If possible, prepare the pots before you dig the saplings so there will be minimal time for them to be out of the soil.

1. Inexpensive **plastic pots** work fine as long as they're clean and have drainage holes in the bottom. Choose the size of the pots according to the size of the saplings and their root balls. Here are some guidelines:

6" – 18" tall	1 gallon pot
18" – 30" tall	2 gallon pot
30" – 48" tall	3 gallon pot
More than 48" tall	5 gallon pot
2. **Combine the native soil** removed from the hole with soil amendment in a ratio of 1 part amendment to 2 parts native soil.
3. **Pre-fill each pot** 1/3 to 1/2 full with the soil mixture from step 2.
4. For saplings up to 3' tall, **sprinkle 1 teaspoon each** of Soil Moist, HollyTone, and Ironite on top of the soil in the pot and mix thoroughly. Use 1 tablespoon of each ingredient for larger saplings.
5. You can also prepare your **initial watering mix** in advance as long as you *keep it out of the sunlight* until you're ready to use it. For each gallon of water, add 1 capful of Quick Start liquid and 4 ounces of Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub.  
Note: Put the water in the container first; then add the other ingredients.

## Potting the Saplings

The key to successful hemlock potting is to be sure the tree ends up "at grade" in the pot, i.e., at the same level in the pot as it was originally growing in the ground, and then keeping them watered weekly during their first 6 months.

1. **Insert a bamboo stake** into the center of the soil in the pot and place the sapling in the pot with its stem as close to the stake as possible. Spread the roots out evenly but gently.
2. **Add enough native soil amendment mix** to just cover the roots plus 1/2 inch more and press down firmly using the backs of your gloved hands to eliminate any air pockets. The pot should be no more than 3/4 full at this point.
3. **Use a short length of Velcro tape** (about 4") to fasten the tree's main stem to the stake *loosely*, 2/3 of the way up the stem, leaving a couple inches of play in the loop. If the tree is 3' or taller, use a second piece of tape about 1/3 of the way up the stem.



4. **Water immediately but slowly**, giving 1 quart of the initial watering mix per gallon of pot size. The water should drain slowly through the soil in the pot.
5. Then place the **potted trees in the shade** where They'll be protected from direct sun and wind.
6. Two or three hours later, **inspect the potted trees** and add more soil amendment mix to cover the roots if the initial watering uncovered them. Press the dirt firmly down again so the little trees are now sitting at the same level in the dirt as where they were originally growing and water again gently with the initial watering mix.
7. During the establishment period of six months to a year, **water with plain water** once a week during any week that you don't have a good rainfall. Keep the soil uniformly moist -- not too wet or too dry. Use ½ gallon of water for each gallon of original root ball size.
8. If the trees are **still in their pots** a year later, retreat them with Bayer Advanced Tree and Shrub.
9. **Maintaining stable moisture and temperature levels** is very important for newly potted saplings, especially during the heat of summer and the cold of winter, and the smaller the pot size the more critical this is. Banking some soil, shredded hardwood mulch, or leaf mulch around the pots up to the level of the dirt in the pot can provide this kind of protection.
10. **Giving additional fertilizer** after potting is usually not necessary, but if it seems necessary, wait at least 2 full seasons before doing so, and be sure to *follow the recommended dosage* on the product label as too much fertilizer can kill a plant.

**ALSO SEE "POTTING HEMLOCK SAPLINGS – ILLUSTRATED."**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>For more information:</b> Call: Hemlock Help Line<sup>SM</sup> 706-429-8010 Visit: <a href="http://www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org">www.savegeorgiashemlocks.org</a></p>
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