

ask the professionals

Advice from members of the BC Landscape & Nursery Association (BCLNA), as well as other gardening experts around our province



Q I have a tree in my front yard that is growing in a low bed. I want to raise the bed around the tree to make it look better. Can I do this without hurting the tree?

A Yes, you can. The key is to dig around the tree trunk carefully, removing the soil and turf without disturbing the roots. Then, you can add a layer of soil or compost to raise the bed to the desired height. Finally, you can install a retaining wall of rocks or bricks around the tree to hold the soil in place.

Q I have a tree in my front yard that is growing in a low bed. I want to raise the bed around the tree to make it look better. Can I do this without hurting the tree?

A Yes, you can. The key is to dig around the tree trunk carefully, removing the soil and turf without disturbing the roots. Then, you can add a layer of soil or compost to raise the bed to the desired height. Finally, you can install a retaining wall of rocks or bricks around the tree to hold the soil in place.



Scott McLeod
President, landscape designer and landscaping coach, FabulousFlowerBeds.com

PLANTING AROUND A TREE

Q Can I install a raised flowerbed around an existing tree without damaging it?
Installing a new raised flowerbed can add significant curb appeal to any home by allowing the plants to be easily viewed from the street. In many landscapes, an existing tree has been planted at an elevation much lower than what is required for a raised flowerbed. At first glance, the homeowner has only two choices: design the flowerbed at the level of the tree or



PHOTO courtesy Scott McLeod

dig up the tree and replant it at a higher elevation. Both options are usually less than ideal. The good news is there is a third option that is often overlooked. Here is what I recommend:

Shape the flowerbed around the tree using a halfmoon blade and remove all turf and related roots in a way that won't disturb the roots of the tree.

Add Sea Soil or a well-composted organic garden-blend soil to the newly formed flowerbed area. At this stage, don't be afraid to place the soil right up against the tree trunk until you have reached the proper elevation.

Carefully begin to dig out a circle around the tree trunk and remove all the soil to

adequately expose the root flare of the tree (where the tree trunk meets the soil) without damaging the bark. This is critically important so that the tree maintains a healthy root and stem structure and the root flare won't rot over time. The diameter of the circle depends on the size of the tree and the look of the surrounding area.

Choose a selection of rocks that are in proportion to the size of the tree and surrounding area and that match the colour scheme of your yard. In this case, the rocks are approximately 30 cm (1 ft.) wide by 90 cm (3 ft.) tall or more, depending on the depth of the soil from the top of the new bed down to the root flare. You will need enough rocks to

cover the circumference of the circle. Next, place the rocks in such a way that they act as a retaining wall keeping the soil in position and away from the tree trunk. Finally, after the large rocks are installed, fill the hole roughly 15 cm (6 in.) deep (depending on the total depth of the hole) with a selection of river rock, making sure that the rock is kept away from the trunk of the tree. 🌱

Send your questions on any gardening topic to cpope@canadawide.com or fax 604-299-9188 or mail to Ask the Professionals, GardenWise, 4th floor, 4180 Lougheed Highway, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 6A7

For more expert advice, visit www.gardenwiseonline.ca/ask-pros