

CAN YOU HANDLE IT?



Sean Butler looks at some of the latest lifting and handling gear available to help you handle shrubs and trees safely and with care

Are you using the right lifting gear? I have put together a list of kit that we have used to help you make your own informed decision, I hope it helps.

Rootball season is now here and we're busy planting copious amounts of small to very large rootball shrubs and trees. This has become one of our specialisms at Cube. To create the instant gardens that many of our clients and garden designers request demands skill and attention to detail. Plant care and handling is often overlooked and it shouldn't be. Lack of knowledge can exacerbate degeneration of incorrect plant care, even more so when handling specimen hedging and trees.

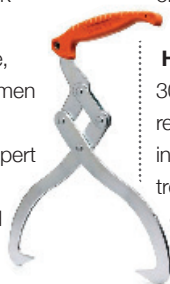
If you are unsure then use an expert or get advice from one. For tree planting, I would highly recommend getting in contact with Steve at Majestic Trees. He has a wealth of knowledge and all the right equipment for handling your large specimen trees.

The most popular instant hedge that we plant in rootball season is *Taxus* (Yew). This type of hedging creates a dense screen and great structure all year round – especially in the winter. The versatility of this type of hedge allows garden designers to incorporate it into any style of garden, be it contemporary, urban, chic, country estate or cottage gardens.

Finding the right lifting gear depends on the rootball size. The hessian sack and wire

wrap is there for a reason, to protect the fibrous root system. Over the years, we have tested and used various lifting gadgets and below are some of our go-to favourites.

Bear in mind, when access is limited, a combination of specialist plant trollies (available from Europlants) and a lifting hook should be used. Lifting hooks should not be used to drag rootball as this can damage the root system. Used correctly in pairs to avoid back injuries these hooks can lift 75kg to 100kg comfortably. It is important to note that your trench (if a hedge) or hole (if singular) should be dug in a dish shape at least 30cm wider all the way around each rootball. This will allow correct handling and once in place the hook can be used to twist the root ball to get the best face on the hedge.

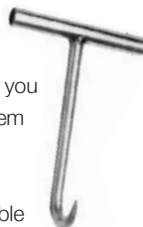


Husqvarna Lifting Tongs

30cm tongs used in pairs can lift 50kg, retailing at £30. This set of lifting tongs comes into its own with smaller rootball shrubs and trees. It is better used in pairs for stability. We do find that these can bend if put under too much load.

Grab Hook

This little rootball hook is the most uncomplicated piece of kit you will find. It's a one-piece metal item which we get our local forge to make in various handle lengths and spike curves. It's also available online for about £30 and will lift rootballs when used in pairs up to 80kg.



Basket Sling

This two person sling is easy to use and very

affordable. Available on Amazon for around £30, it will lift 80–100kg. We use this when we have had rootballs collapse on delivery. This protects the hessian from further deterioration and ensures you have saved the plant from further stress.



Rootball Lifter

If space and access is not an issue this easy to use rootball lifter is available from Anglia handling services. We like this one as the hooks stop the rootball slipping and cater for most domestic tree lifting situations. We would advise wrapping hessian sacks around the lifting hook and lifting arm to prevent accidental damage to the tree.

Root Ball Lifters are designed to lift trees easily and safely. Manufactured and shaped from mild steel with five spikes. Used in conjunction with a webbing sling around the truck as shown. It has a capacity of 1,500kg and retails at £680 plus VAT.



Lift with care at all times and always take advice when unsure.

ABOUT SEAN BUTLER

Sean Butler is a landscape designer and director of Cube 1994. With a background in civil engineering, Sean has an in-depth understanding of the design, construction and maintenance of the physical and naturally built landscape.
www.cube1994.com