American hazelnut seedlings

Blackford Valley Farm | Planting guide

American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*) is a native, multi-stem shrub producing small edible nuts in leafy husks. It spreads by suckers and is useful in hedgerows and wildlife plantings. These seedlings will differ in nut size, yield, and harvest timing.

Site and growth

- **Form:** Generally a broad shrub around **6–12 feet** high, sometimes taller. Allow room for suckering stems and access to harvest nuts.
- **Light and soil:** Full sun produces the strongest nut crops; partial shade can support the plant with fewer nuts. Choose a site with **reasonable drainage** and water new shrubs through dry spells.
- **Climate:** This native shrub suits many Midwestern sites, but winter injury and spring flowering vary by site and seedling. Confirm the local hardiness zone.

Soil, roots, and water

For **Corylus americana**, NC State lists **acid-to-neutral pH** and moist to occasionally dry conditions with good drainage. Drained clay is tolerated alongside loam and sand, not specifically preferred; clay texture does not excuse poor aeration. No narrow numerical pH optimum is established. Do not substitute recommendations for European filberts or hybrids. On strongly alkaline ground, test soil and investigate nutrient availability if foliage yellows or growth stalls; do not apply lime by habit.

Give its spreading, suckering root system penetrable, aerated soil rather than a confined, compacted planting hole. Shallow rock and restricted drainage reduce usable rooting space. Check beneath mulch during the first growing seasons and water slowly when the planted root zone begins drying, letting excess drain. Established shrubs tolerate occasional dryness, but prolonged drought can restrict shoot growth and developing nuts. Flood tolerance is unverified in the checked species guidance; moist soil does not mean safe inundation. Permanent saturation can deprive roots of oxygen and cause decline or death; this is not a swamp shrub.

Drained soil with dependable moisture supports healthy stems and nut development; full sun and compatible wind-borne pollen remain important. Good soil cannot guarantee nut size or yield in seedlings. NC State reports occasional leaf spots, blight, and crown gall, not complete disease immunity. Diagnose symptoms before treatment rather than assuming wet soil or pH identifies a pathogen.

Planting for nuts

Plant **several unrelated seedlings** close enough for their wind-carried pollen to reach neighboring plants. Hazelnuts flower very early, and weather can affect pollination. Some plants may show nuts while young, but a dependable harvest takes longer and varies by seedling. Nuts are food for people as well as squirrels, birds, and other wildlife; harvest promptly as husks mature if you want a share. Deer may also feed on fallen nuts, but squirrels and other small animals can take them before deer encounter them; this is a less dependable deer draw than a heavy fruit or acorn crop.

Plant your potted seedling

We sell and recommend **potted seedlings**. Our planting method requires a **square hole, not a round one**. A wider hole is preferred, not required; it must fit the root ball without squeezing it. Dig no deeper than the root ball in its pot, and shallower as needed to leave the **top of the root ball slightly above surrounding ground level**. Rest it on firm soil so it does not settle too deep. Water the pot before removal; support the root ball, not the stem, and keep it together. Check for circling roots rather than forcing a root-bound ball into the hole. Backfill

around the sides with native soil, taper soil to cover exposed side roots, and water thoroughly. Keep the root flare exposed; do not pile soil or mulch over the ball's top or against the trunk. Check both the root ball and nearby soil for moisture while roots establish.

Protect and establish

In deer country, **effective protection is nearly required** for young shrubs. Deer can browse shoots, while **rabbits, mice, and voles** can chew low stems and kill them. A well-anchored, ventilated tube may protect an initially single-stem plant, but **a roomy tall cage with a fine-mesh lower guard** better accommodates the natural multi-stem shape. Secure the base, inspect for rodent entry and nests, and widen or remove any tube before it confines new stems. Keep weeds and tall grass back from the base, maintain mulch off stems, and water while roots establish.

A good fit for

Edible hedges, orchard borders, and diverse wildlife plantings with space for multiple shrubs.

Learn more

Use the soil-location map to screen survey pH layers, drainage, water storage, and rooting restrictions where recorded. Survey estimates are not a soil test or field inspection of the planting spot. Verify actual depth and seasonal wetness and test before amendments. The map does not measure current moisture or predict nut yield.

- NC State Extension: American hazelnut
- NC State Extension: soil depth, aeration, pH, and nutrient availability
- University of Minnesota Extension: establishment watering and mulch
- University of Missouri Extension: pollination and wildlife plantings
- Penn State Extension: shelter cages for trees and shrubs