

Plant a Perfect Tree

Just one slight adjustment can dramatically enhance your Vrksasana

By Kristin McGee

If you're a seasoned yoga practitioner, you may think it odd that I'm giving you a trick for Vrksasana (Tree Pose). Yet this is the perfect asana for improving balance and for toning and strengthening your thighs, hips, and waist, no matter what your level is.

As we advance in our practice, we need to continue to refine the basic foundational poses; and even if we are super-advanced, we know that our balance changes from day to day.

The Magic: With this simple tweak to your Tree Pose, you will gain even more turnout in the leg that's lifted, more awareness in your feet, more strength in muscle groups you don't work as often, and the ability to be



By turning your toes around toward the back of your thigh, you get more of an opening in your hip rotators, as well as a better balance.

completely steady and grounded, no matter what is going on in your life.

The Practice: Stand in Tadasana with your feet together. Engage your thigh muscles by drawing up your kneecaps and activating your quadriceps. Then, draw your right foot up, placing it as high as you can on your inner left thigh.

Most likely, your right toes are pointing directly to the floor. Now, turn your right toes back ever so slightly, presenting the inner right heel, and wrap your pinky toe around the back of your left thigh.

This very subtle shift will allow for a greater turnout in your right hip, giving your external hip rotators more of a workout. It will also bring your right knee back further, which acts as a counterweight—and helps you nail your balance immediately.

To help keep you stay upright, root your left foot into the floor and engage your outer left hip (rather than shifting to your left side). Press your hands together in prayer in front of your chest, and draw your abdomen in towards your spine. Notice how this increases the steadiness in your Tree Pose.

The more I practice, the more I realize that it's finding the minutiae in the simplest postures or the simpler things in life that add more contentment to each day. Sometimes, we think "advanced yoga" means doing the craziest poses and showing off. But really, the more advanced we become in life, the more we realize that all we need is to be grounded in ourselves and rooted firmly in our beliefs—and we will continue to blossom and grow. 🌱

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