

# Tips for Successful Planting

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To give your outdoor plants the best start, you must ensure that they are planted correctly. The same basic planting rules apply to all plants, from large trees down to small alpines.

Firstly, make sure the plant will be happy in the site you have chosen. Points to consider include soil type and pH, the risk of exposure to winds and frosts, and the amount of sun/shade, moisture/drainage it will receive. If in any doubt, we have free handout leaflets at Bawdeswell Garden Centre to help you select the right plant for any aspect of your garden.

Next, clear the planting area of weeds and debris. If using a chemical weedkiller, make sure the one you select will not harm your new plant. Dig a hole at least twice the width and depth of the plant pot. Growth above and below ground will be slowed down by compacted soil, so the more you work the soil the better.

Prior to planting, we recommend that you enrich and improve the structure of the soil. Incorporate organic matter and compost, and add horticultural sand or grit if drainage is a problem. Always include a little bonemeal as it encourages strong root growth. Lastly add a slow release, general fertiliser into the mix.

Trees and tall plants it may require a stake for support. Drive this into the hole first and then plant around it.

Water the plant well and then remove it from its pot. Any sacking on root ball plants should be left untouched. Gently loosen the outside roots, as this will encourage them to spread outwards once planted. Plant using the planting mix, firming down as you go. Ensure that ultimately the top of the rootball and the ground are level.

Now water! Your new plant will now need a good soak. The most common reason for plant loss is inadequate watering. Water daily when first planted and then monitor closely, particularly during the first year and during dry spells. It is more beneficial to water thoroughly every few days than water sparingly every day. Water slowly, close to the base of the plant, allowing the moisture to seep down to the roots.

As an example of quantity, a small shrub will require 1 gallon of water at each watering and a large tree will need several large watering cans.

Adding a surface mulch of bark, gravel or similar product will help reduce moisture loss. A useful, water-saving tip is to add a length of pipe when planting. Water can then be poured down the pipe directly to the roots.

The best time to plant is autumn when the soil is warmed and moisture levels are rising. Roots continue to grow but top growth is dormant at this time. Your plant therefore has the chance to get established before it has to contend with its first summer. Next best time to plant is spring. Avoid planting in the height of summer unless you can provide sufficient water, or in the winter if the soil is frozen or waterlogged.

