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Specialists in sourcing and supplying high quality plants
for garden designers, landscapers and architects

Plants for Purpose

Planting Out of Season



With the right considerations, plants can be planted out of season in the warm summer months.

We all know the drill, plant perennials and spring bulbs in autumn, hedges and trees in winter and summer bulbs, annuals, and later flowering perennials in spring. These horticultural commandments have been the bases of our planting calendar since we lifted our first trowel.

Planting Seasons

Heaven forbid that you plant anything in summer, when the endless heat and sunshine will wither your precious plantlings to a crisp but is this really the case? Think for a moment about other areas of the world, how would a gardener get any plants in the ground in Australia if they followed these rules? We wonder also, how much of this lore was set in stone before we had containerised plants and erratic seasons with their unpredictable rainfall and temperatures. Certainly, right now, after the coldest and driest April we can ever remember, it feels like we can't take anything for granted in terms of watering, fleecing and preparing the ground for planting. Clay soils were cracking and taking on the properties of concrete right up until when we had the first May deluge.

Rootballed vs Container Grown

A few things are unnegotiable, trees and shrubs that are field grown and lifted should not be lifted whilst in active growth ie. when they are dormant. For deciduous species this means when their leaves have fallen. Plants that are lifted with a decent sized root ball and that are subsequently protected from the wind and extremes of temperature can be planted right up until May and beyond.

Container grown stock means that we can continue to plant trees, shrubs and perennials at any time of the year, we just need to prepare the soil and establish plants correctly.

Traditionally the Garden Centre trade have developed their range of plants to be sold when they look good, not when they are best planted. Landscapers and Designers can be much more flexible about when they want their plants as they are not restricted by market footfall.

They also don't need the plants to be at garden centre peak of perfection with enticing flower buds waiting to pop. Early summer flowering plants benefit from a cut back whilst in the pot and planting in late summer, late summer flowering plants will put up with being planted when in flower and some will benefit from being cut back. Planting conditions and aftercare are so much more impactful than planting timings.

So, what can you do to assist the establishment of soft landscaping, planted over the summer months?

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Summer Planting



Planting conditions and aftercare are so much more impactful than planting timings, so what can you do to assist the establishment of soft landscaping planted over the summer months?

Right plant, Right place

Before you consider any planting at any time of the year, it is first important to remember that even the most pampered plant if planted in the wrong location will never thrive.

Pick the correct plant for the conditions, after that all other elements should fall into place.

Soil Preparation

Once you have selected the correct plant, the condition of the soil will be the factor that has the most impact on your success. The main issues with soil are poor drainage or poor water holding capacity (which can also lead to poor nutrient availability).

The solution for most soil problems is organic matter - and a lot of it. Organic matter will hold water and nutrients in sandy, free draining soils, while it allows water to percolate through heavy clay soils.

Before planting, make sure that sufficient organic matter has been applied to the entire bed and that cultivation has been deep enough to fully incorporate it into the soil.

During planting, fill your planting holes with water before placing plants within them. This ensures there is a ready supply of moisture at the roots. Water and firm every plant in thoroughly, to encourage the soil to settle closely against the roots. Finally, mulch with a minimum of 10cm of well-rotted organic matter to seal the moisture in, taking care to avoid mulching right up to the stem or crown of the plant.

Be mindful, using weed suppressant fabric although this may help with keeping weeds temporarily at bay it does slow the natural movement from the organic matter, beneficial microbes and water.

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Watering to Establish

After planting, water regularly. It is better to water slowly at the base of a plant less often and penetrate deeply into the soil than it is to water the entire bed lightly, more frequently.

This encourages the plant's roots to extend and establish deeper into the soil as they chase the water down rather than becoming reliant on you watering the top few centimetres of soil and succumbing to drought when you forget.

The aim should be to water between 1 - 2 times a week during summer months.

An average sized tree will need 90 - 100 litres of water, a week during the first 3 - 5 years of its life (that's 10 watering cans per tree) By watering in this way you will create a well-established plant that can survive most heatwaves and result in less time watering.

For more information on how and when to water new plants, get in touch to request a copy of our watering guide.

Given this degree of care, and assuming you have positioned plants to suit their preferred light levels and given them sufficient space to grow, there is no reason why summer planting can't be as successful as planting carried out in spring or autumn.

