

PLANTING & CARE OF POTTED PLANTS



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IMMEDIATE CARE: Remove plants from the box as soon as you receive them. Water each plant to the saturation point and allow for free drainage; this will rehydrate and resettle the soil and contents. For best results, plant as soon as possible. Also, see **SEASONAL SPECIFICS** (back).

If you cannot plant right away, keep the pots or trays in a semi-shady location with adequate air circulation. Check the soil moisture for each individual plant. Water needs will vary depending on species and size. Allow soil to dry out for short periods of time to prevent overwatering.

ATTENTION: Greenhouse pruning is a standard procedure; **some of your plants may have been trimmed.** This helps to prevent damage and water loss during shipping.

CONSIDERATIONS: Knowing your site's sun exposure and soil moisture capacity, as well as the sun and soil preferences of the plants, will help you place them to their best growing advantage.

HEIGHT: Be aware of the potential height of each plant. A common planting convention is to place the tallest species in the back or center of a garden.

BLOOM TIME/COLOR: Consider whether you want plants with similar bloom times or colors close to one another (for a group/drift appearance), interspersed (for a wild/natural look), or in separate spaces in the garden (several focal points).

GRADIENT MOISTURE: Place species indicated for wetter soil in the lowest portion of a sloped site.

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PLANTING BASICS: Know the growing requirements of each species.

1. WATER the pots or trays before planting.

2. DIG the planting holes so they are roughly two to three times the size of the root mass.

If your site is a good match for your plants, soil amendments are not necessary. Moderate amounts of compost, peat, or fertilizer can be used to encourage more rapid establishment. Combine amendments into each hole and thoroughly mix with original soil. For larger plots, apply amendments in advance over the entire site surface.

Caution: Overly rich soil can cause floppy, lanky plant growth. Routine fertilization is not recommended.

3. REMOVE PLANTS from the container: firmly squeeze the pot sides to loosen the soil mass. Use the drainage holes as leverage points to push from the root ball; if necessary, *gently* wiggle the plant until it is completely released from the pot. If roots have tangled or fused together outside the drainage holes, trim the exterior roots with a sharp, clean tool.



4. BACKFILL the soil beneath and around the new plant to the same level as the surrounding soil, pressing firmly around the stem to avoid large air pockets. This also forms a slight depression which will hold water and channel moisture to the roots.



5. WATER gently but thoroughly to settle the soil and encourage deep root growth.

6. MARK each new plant. This helps ensure that the plant receives the care and attention it may require. A marker also identifies the plant as a desirable garden plant - not a weed.



WATERING: It is very important to provide new plants with a deeply saturating water regimen to encourage roots to grow down towards the natural water table. These deep roots are what make your natives drought and frost resistant. Continue to check the soil moisture on your site and supplement watering to prevent significant drought conditions for the first growing season.

Once established, most native plants should be able to withstand local weather conditions.

MULCH: There are several products available to use as mulch; most are made of wood or shredded bark. Leaf litter and weed-free composts can also function as mulch. About two to four inches of such material will help keep weeds from germinating as profusely. Leave a small area clear where the native plant stems and leaves emerge from the ground. Weeds will still occur, but the mulch will make it easier to rake or pull them out. Mulch also maintains soil moisture and buffers rapid temperature changes. Some gardeners use newspaper or uncoated cardboard underneath the mulch to reinforce the weed barrier. Cut or fold several layers of newspaper so they fit between your plants, then top-dress with mulch or compost.

WEED MANAGEMENT: A native garden can become low maintenance with time, but for the first few years, weeds can overwhelm any planting. Hand-weeding will be a necessity several times a year for at least the first two growing seasons. It is easier to do weed control in spring before the native plant foliage fills out.



SEASONAL SPECIFICS:

SPRING: Hardening off your plants will prepare them for the real weather conditions of your garden. Place the pots or trays in a shaded, protected area. Over the course of several days, gradually move the plants away from the sheltered space until they have acclimated to the light and wind conditions of the planting site. Continue to check for soil moisture; the plants will need more water as they experience the elements.

Protect plants from freezing temperatures and frost by covering them with a windproof cover or moving them to temporary shelter indoors.

FALL: Late season plantings may require less watering since the soil often retains more moisture as the air temperatures cool. Check soil moisture levels and decrease watering as necessary.

Especially in northern climates, alternating cycles of freezing and thawing can cause frost-heaving and root damage during the winter and spring extremes. Once the ground is thoroughly frozen with night temperatures consistently at or below 32° F, mulch the planting site to hold in moisture and winter cold; this insulation mitigates drastic temperature swings in the top layer of soil. Apply a 2-6" layer of whatever organic material you have available: leaf litter, straw, wood mulch, etc. Cover close to the plant base.

Be sure the ground is frozen. Covering too early can insulate and maintain warm soil temperatures, allowing rodents to dig down and consume plant parts.

After the freeze-thaw cycles have passed, remove the winter cover. Spring growth may be inhibited if the mulch layer remains close to the crown.





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