

Finance and Infrastructure Services

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ITEM DESCRIPTION: Arid area planting guidelines

General guidelines

- Select a suitable species for the area you are to plant in. Ensure your plants are sun hardened. Best planting time in Alice Springs is spring.
- Ensure your irrigation system is in place and operating prior to planting. Drip irrigation is preferred.
- Excavate a planting hole twice the width and twice the depth of the pot. Break up the sides and base of the hole. Fill the hole with water and leave to drain.
- Addition of a good quality planting mix can help break up the soil, improve drainage and aeration.
- Supply and place an organic fertilizer suitable to the species you are planting into the hole as per manufacturer's instructions. Remember different species have different fertilizer requirements. It is recommended that slow release fertilizer tablets are placed in the hole and 'Osmocote' is placed on the surface.
- Remove plant from its container without damaging the roots and place the plant in the hole to a depth no greater than it was growing in the pot. Backfill the hole with soil. Gently firm down the soil. The top surface of the soil in the pot should be at the same level as the ground surface and exactly the same amount of stem is above the ground as when the plant was in the pot.
- Create a small dish around the plant with excavated soil to retain moisture.
- Apply 100-150 mm deep of mulch (sand or screened gravel for 'Habitat' plantings) to a 1.2 m diameter around the plant. Do not mulch around the stem or trunk of the plant as this will cause rot to set in.
- Deep water plant immediately.
- Stake the plant with a three fence droppers and a temporary tree guard. Do not allow stake to penetrate root ball.
- Quantity and frequency of watering depends on soil type, time of year and local rainfall. Deep watering twice a week is preferable to shallow watering every day. Deep watering encourages strong root systems that help your plant to withstand dry periods better. Shallow watering does not encourage roots to penetrate deeply but encourages them to surface root, which is undesirable.

Plant supply

It is advisable to order plants in advance for any landscape project to ensure their availability. It may take six months to grow a plant to the minimum size suitable for planting.