



GUIDE TO PLANTING AND CARING FOR NATIVES AT HOME

Planting native trees and shrubs is a rewarding way to create a cooler, more resilient outdoor space and provide habitat for local wildlife.

Use this handy guide to get started – from choosing the right species and location, through to soil preparation, planting and ongoing care to help your garden thrive.

BEFORE YOU PLANT

Choose the right species and location

Before planting, take time to consider:

- **Purpose of the plant** – is it for shade, screening or habitat?
- **Sunlight** – is the space in full sun, dappled light or shade?
- **Services** – check for underground and overhead services to avoid
- **Soil and moisture** – drier, well-draining soils suit woodland or coastal species, while wetter areas suit riverine, wetland or monsoon species
- **Mature size and shape** - consider how tall and wide the plant will grow.

Tip: keep your plants labelled so you can look them up

Prepare the site

- Dig a hole at least twice the width and depth of the pot
- Loosen surrounding soil to help roots spread
- Water the hole thoroughly and let it soak in
- Clear weeds within 1 metre
- Space shrubs at least 1 metre apart, and trees 4-5 metres apart.



Check out City of Darwin's Gardens for Wildlife program.

Your new plants

Are now ready to plant, and can remain in their pots (species dependent).

Water them daily and plant as soon as you can so they don't become root bound or nutrient deficient.

Request a free garden visit, or download our Creating Habitat for Darwin Gardens booklet, to find the best species for your space.



SCAN ME

Or visit: darwin.nt.gov.au/gardens-for-wildlife



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PLANTING

Natives can be planted year-round if watered regularly. The build-up or wet season are ideal, as monsoonal rains help plants establish.

To plant your natives:

1. Soak them thoroughly before planting
2. Place your hand around the stem, turn the pot upside down, firmly tap the edge on a hard surface and gently slide off the pot, keeping the root ball intact
3. Do not 'tease' the roots – these native plants, grown in root trainers and air-pruned, are ready to plant straight from the pot
4. Place the plant in the hole, level with the surrounding ground (too deep may cause stem rot and too high will expose the roots)
5. Backfill with soil, gently firming to remove air pockets without compacting
6. Water well immediately after planting.



Credit: Territory Native Plants.

Recycle your pots

Return your pots for recycling at City of Darwin's next native plant giveaway or the dedicated bin at Finlays Stone (845 Stuart Hwy, Holtze). Small forestry tubes, larger megatubes and 14L round pots are accepted.

AFTER YOU PLANT

Mulching

- Apply mulch – such as forest mulch, wood chip or hay - to retain moisture, suppress weeds and provide nutrients.
- Keep mulch away from the stem to prevent rotting.
- Create a small well to directly water to the roots.

Staking and protecting plants

Staking is generally not recommended, as healthy plants should be strong enough to support themselves. However, stakes, tree guards, logs and other items can help protect young plants from gardening, mowing, dogs and particularly bush chooks!

Watering

Water your plants daily until established - usually after one full wet season - and then occasionally as needed. Be mindful of over watering.

Woodland species prefer moisture to drain and dry briefly before their next drink, while lush evergreen or monsoon species prefer more consistent moisture. Wilting leaves usually suggest the plant is thirsty.



Fertilising

Most natives grow well without fertiliser, but a slow-release native fertiliser can be beneficial, especially when planting.

Avoid high-phosphate fertilisers - use low phosphorus or organic options, ideally before the wet season.



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