

THE SUCCESSFUL TREE PLANTING GUIDE

FOR THE MARIBYRNONG & WERRIBEE CATCHMENTS

There are some simple rules and techniques that if followed, will ensure successful tree planting and will guarantee that good growth and survival rates are achieved.

- Prepare the site
- Choose the right species for the site
- Plant during the planting season
- Plant young healthy seedlings

SITE PREPARATION

Prepare the site by spot spraying a small 600-700mm diameter circle, at least 2 weeks prior to planting (use glyphosate at the recommended rate). The grass needs to be actively growing for the glyphosate to be effective.

Young seedlings do not need a lot of moisture or nutrients to grow, but they are not very good at competing with weeds. For maximum growth and survival rates, it is imperative that most of the weeds are controlled during the first 12 months.

PLANTING TECHNIQUES FOR TUBESTOCK

- Don't plant until after the Autumn break (April/May) when there will be good soil moisture levels
- Ensure that the tubestock is thoroughly watered prior to planting. In times of drought when there is minimal residual moisture in the soil, consider filling the hole the day before planting, to create a moist subsoil zone for the plant
- When planting seedlings, it is essential that the technique used ensures there is good earth root contact with no air pockets. To achieve this, dig a small hole with a mattock (the hole needs to be approximately 150mm deep x 200mm wide). Shatter any clods with the side of the mattock.
- At the time of planting remove any excess roots from the bottom of the tube. Remove the plant from the forestry tube by inverting the tube and tapping the edge on a hard surface (rock or mattock handle). Do not squeeze the tube as squeezing will damage many of the fine roots.
- Plant to the same level as the surrounding earth. Backfill with friable soil and firm down. Water the tree after planting. The amount of water applied will vary depending on the site and season/time of year (0.5 to 1 litre). Normally seedlings will only require watering at the time of planting, however during extreme drought conditions, a second application may be required 10-14 days after planting. On some sedimentary soils, which become hydrophobic when dry, it may be necessary to create a shallow saucer around the plant to allow for penetration of the water.
- Use tree guards in high wind areas or to prevent decimation of the plant by rabbits or hares.
- The addition of slow release fertiliser will aid plant establishment and growth but is not necessary. Mulching with hay, grass clippings, woodchips or other organic mulch will help with moisture retention and assist plant growth. It is a time consuming exercise and not essential.

PLANTING IN RIPARIAN ZONES (Areas along waterways prone to inundation)

In riparian zones that may be subject to flooding, consider using a Hamilton tree planter to make a hole for the tubestock. These tools cause minimal soil disturbance. If the creek floods after planting, the tree guard will be lost but the tree will survive and only a few millimetres of potting mix will be lost. Planting in flood prone areas, using a mattock, may result in the loss of the plant tree guard and all the disturbed soil.

When planting in riparian zones, plants are often subjected to intense browsing by swamp wallabies. The application of a coarse carborundum powder to foliage works as a suitable deterrent, thus allowing the plant to establish.

HAMILTON TREE PLANTERS

These tools should only be used for planting in sandy soils or deep alluvial soils in riparian zones. The permeable nature of these soils allows for moisture penetration deep into the subsoil, which the plant is easily able to access.

RIPPING

Ripping of basalt soils is not necessary. The soil is very receptive to moisture and roots have an amazing ability to penetrate most natural soil profiles. Basalt soils are very reactive, ripping will tend to encourage the formation of cracks in the rip lines, leaving the plants exposed and often resulting in death.

Sedimentary soils are not particularly receptive to moisture. Consider ripping sedimentary soil to a depth of 300mm to allow for moisture penetration into the subsoil zone. These soils are particularly prone to erosion so be careful to cross rip along contour lines.

JUTE MATS

Jutemats squares are not recommended, unless there has been no prior opportunity to prepare the site, as in a dry autumn when there is no new growth on the grass. The jutemat will suppress the grass and allow for perimeter spraying of weeds at a later date. Jutemats have a low biomass and have a minimal effect on moisture retention.

PREFERRED PLANTING TIMES

Dry valley slopes, Forested areas (frost cover), Plains lower catchment - May to August

Riparian zones:

Lower catchment – late August to early September.

Upper catchment (Romsey, Lancefield, Ballan) open plains, riparian zones – September to mid November.

All nursery tubestock has been hardened off prior to supply, but young plants can still be severely damaged by heavy frosts. Do not plant tubestock into frost hollows in winter.

THE BOTTOMLINE

If it takes more than two minutes to plant, then you are mucking around. Successful tree planting should be a quick and simple process.

Sunbury Landcare Association.
Western Plains Flora - Ian Taylor. 2008

