

# Grass tree planting and care guide

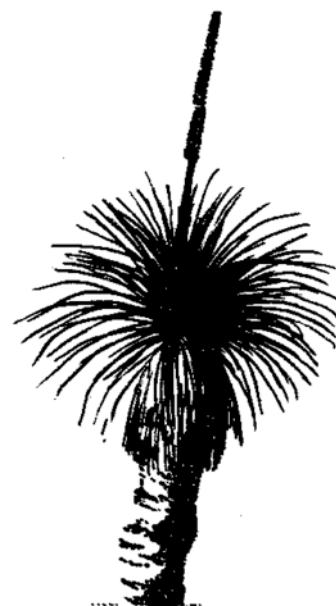
These tips are general guidance and may need to be adjusted to your specific garden conditions.

Grass Trees from reputable suppliers are low maintenance and easy to plant. Long healthy grass is a sign that the roots have recovered from the transplanting.

## planting out

### Site Preparations

- Full sun or part shade.
- When creating a new garden bed to plant into, we suggest using a native soil mix or general garden mix.
- Grass trees grow well in most soil types but need good drainage conditions. Once established they can handle lots of rain or long dry periods but if they constantly have 'wet feet' they will develop root rot.
- *Pro tip* - If you are unsure if your soil drains well enough, dig a decent hole where you plan to plant the tree and keep filling it with water for a few days to simulate lots of rain. If the water drains away, then you're fine. If not, or you have heavy clay soil, create a drainage solution, like raised bed of soil.
- Ensure that the soil the roots will be growing into is free of potentially toxic building materials and has some nutritional value. Do this by placing your grass tree in a hole or on a mound that has plenty of room to backfill with a native soil mix.



### Planting

- Disturb the roots as little as possible. Rather than pulling or rolling the tree to get it loose from the pot, try the following:
  - o Gently lay the tree over and cut the round base off the pot.
  - o Carefully place the tree in a hole that is larger than the root ball.
  - o Cut up the side of the pot and lift up and away from the root ball. Do not disturb the roots.
- Do not leave the pot around the root ball when you plant it.
- Backfill the hole around the roots firmly with a well draining native soil mix.
- Water in well until all the soil around the tree is saturated. Create a low wall of soil around the tree if necessary to prevent the water from running away from the roots.
- Trees need to be firm in the ground. If they are very tall and potentially unstable they may need propping with stakes until roots grow more extensively.
- Fertilise with a seaweed-based fertilizer.

## maintenance

Once established and growing vigorously, grass trees are maintenance-free. Although, like anything, they don't mind a drink when it gets really dry.

### **Watering**

- Until the roots are established (at least 12-24 months) grass trees will need a regular deep watering once or twice a week. Or maybe even more during really hot, dry periods. Less often during cooler, wetter times of the year.
- *Pro tip* – check the moisture in the soil by taking a dry stick and pushing into the ground near the base of the tree. Leave it there for a moment and then remove to see the level of moisture in the soil. If the soil is dry at a depth of 5-10cm or more, your tree needs water.

### **Feeding**

- Monthly doses of a seaweed fertiliser should keep the tree nutritionally balanced and promote root growth – particularly valuable in the first 12 months after planting.
- Feed with a slow release fertilizer for natives, especially during flowering.

### **Preventing problems**

- Keep mulch back about 15cm from the base of the tree trunk to avoid rotting the trunk.
- Monitor flower spikes for caterpillars as they can eat down into the tree itself. Treat with pyrethrum insect spray and cut spike off below level of the caterpillar entry hole.
- Be on the lookout for scale insect attacks. Remove by rubbing the leaves together and spraying with horticultural oil. Refer to the product label for correct application.

### **Appearance**

- Feel free to trim older leaves as they die off and hang down beside the trunk to maintain a neater manicured appearance and keep the black trunk on display.
- Alternatively, burn the dead growth every few years to remove the dead leaves, make the trunk black, and invigorate new growth. Be aware that they burn hot and fast. Follow appropriate safety procedures etc.
- After flowering, grass trees commonly stop growing new grass. Don't panic.

## potted grass tree care

- Follow the tips for planted grass trees
- Water once or twice a week, 7- 10 litres– adjust according to soil moisture content (if the soil is dry 5-10cm down it needs watering)
- Spray the leaves till dripping with combined seaweed solution once a month.
- Feed early in spring and autumn with slow release granules for natives.
- Remove the flower spike to encourage continuous growth, or be prepared to sit out its dormant period.