

THE GOLDEN RULES OF PLANTING

So much confusion. Ask ten different people and you'll be told ten different things. We *do* sympathise but here's a summary of what, over many years of planting we've learned are :

1. VITAL 2. OKAY 3. MAD

(It's all common sense but, providing you're not too far away, we can always plant, guarantee and maintain the plants for you)

VITAL

Plant High

Most people have clay soil that can lay wet all winter and rot roots. Plant high, mounding the soil up round the root ball and the plant has a much greater chance of success - it's got something light and well drained to root in to.

If you have beautifully well drained soil this may not be necessary - but it usually is.

Surround with a large area, clear of grass or weeds

See adjoining rant No.:3 for more on this important business of avoiding competition.

Use mulch

This is mulch from a mulching machine - not spent mushroom compost or green waste from the local tip. Buy in bulk (not bags, too expensive) and be generous. The bacteria break it down, the worms assimilate it into the soil. The maximum effect for the minimum work and the plants love it.

Try your local tree surgeon for a supply.

If you use extra compost, don't put any under the root ball

This can cause the rootball to sink which is the equivalent of planting low. If soil is too deep round the base of a woody plant, the bark will rot.

This is the same as a rabbit ring-barking it. It will die.

Stake or guy really, really well

This is the thing people have the greatest trouble with. Not unsurprisingly, we have a lot to say on the subject.

Whether to guy or to stake? How many stakes? How to stake? This needs a discussion with us - please ask.

Protect from rabbits, deer and anything else that attacks plants

Visit our stock field and see how we do it - or ask for advice. Easier than the staking but just as important.

Don't over water

People always worry about how much to water but it's not as hard as people think. In our experience more plants are killed by *over* watering than *under* watering. If they have too little water, they can drop their leaves and wait. If they're sitting in a bog, all they can do is have their roots rotted and die. Bamboos and some herbaceous plants often benefit from plenty of water but most of our plants come from parts of the world with long dry summers and once established* they NEVER need watering. There's a common expression in horticulture - '*Killed by kindness.*'

***some fast growing plants do need lots of water to get established - *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus* come to mind**

OKAY

Planting with extra peat or compost

Why? What's the point? We do this very rarely - usually only when specifically asked to. Plants have got to make a go in whatever soil they're in.

A bag of peat isn't going to make much difference is it? However, we DO use masses of mulch and let the bacteria and the worms do their work..

Using those watering tubes

Some people are very keen on these tubes that you pour water down to get to the roots. They're probably marvellous but we never use them and feel the way we do it is perfectly adequate.

Feeding

When customers ask - '*Shall I feed it?*' we usually say '*No.*' It's sometimes another case of '*Killed by kindness.*' We've all done it. "*I paid a lot of money for you so I'm going to be terribly nice to you and give you lots of water and lots of food. And kill you.*". Unless you're on very poor sandy or chalky soil, just obey our other rules, don't feed, and you'll begin to realise that, with a bit of common sense, killing plants isn't easy, it's extremely difficult.

MAD

Using that plastic woven membrane stuff to suppress weeds

A layer of plastic over your soil means you can never improve the soil with organic mulch and you can never see what your soil's like. It look hideous (it's often covered in bark chips which blow around exposing areas of tatty looking plastic), it doesn't let all the rain through so it either directs too much water into or away from a rootball (depending on whether the plant is planted high or low) and it certainly doesn't suppress weeds as they can root through the membrane given a chance. If you want to control weeds, use a good old fashioned hoe.

Torturing your plants in pots

See adjoining rant No:4 for more on this thorny subject.
