

# How to plant local native plants

Factsheet | June 2021

## 1. Digging the hole

Dig to spade depth/slightly deeper than the pot the seedling is in, then loosen soil in bottom of hole with further jabs of the spade; so that the plant's roots will have loose soil to grow down into. Store the dug out soil right next to the hole (on soil, not on mulch), as you will need it to backfill after planting.

Note: if the area is already mulched, clear the mulch away from vicinity of the hole.

**TIP: The best times to plant natives are during autumn and winter. Plant after the opening rains (around Anzac Day) as soon as the soil is wet and easy to dig. This gives the plants lots of time to establish roots before the next summer.**

## 2. Removing the plant

Firstly, covering the opening of the pot by putting the plant between your fingers, tip the tube upside down (see fig. 1). Then carefully tap a corner of the pot firmly against a hard object (for example, the top of the spade handle) to dislodge the seedling and soil as one. Cradle the plant carefully in your hands as it comes out, to prevent soil loss.

## 3. Planting

This may be done in pairs. Plant just below ground level, forming a bowl in the soil to collect any water and prevent runoff (see fig. 2). Carefully insert the plant into the hole and check the height. Adjust soil level if it is too deep or too shallow, then hold the plant in position. While one person holds plant, the other can backfill carefully by taking handfuls of soil and rubbing it back and forth in their hands, "crumbling" loose soil carefully into all sides of the hole. Be careful! The roots are very fragile. Only push down gently to settle the soil, not too hard.

**TIP: For school students, we recommend using a lightweight spade (refer photo in fig 4) as a full-size spade or fork is too unwieldy for them. Hand trowels are only suitable if soil is soft.**



Fig. 1 - getting the plant out of the tube

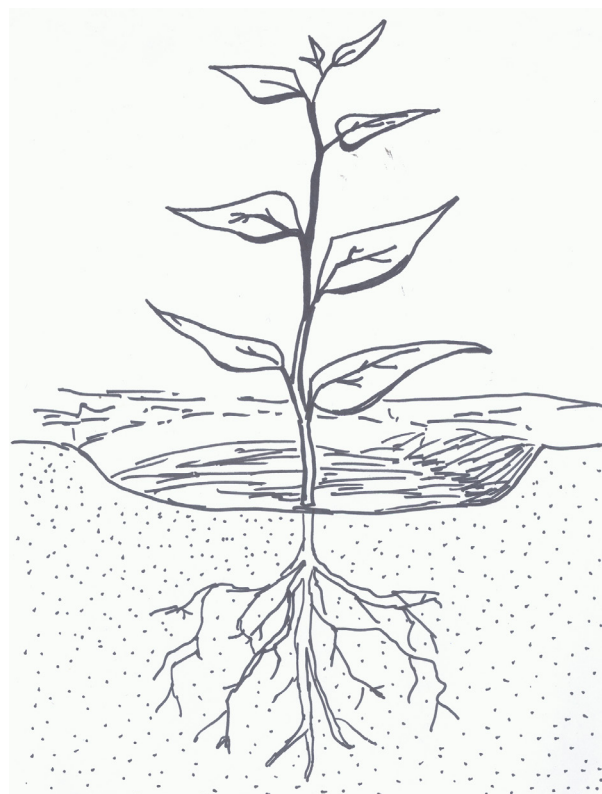


Fig. 2 - make a shallow bowl

## 4. Watering

It is essential to water plants straight after planting! Fill the bowl with water, and repeat once the water has soaked in. Check that roots have not been exposed.

**TIP: Native plants benefit greatly from regular weekly or fortnightly watering during their first summer. After that they should be fine on their own.**

## 5. Erecting a tree guard

**Step 1** place two bamboo stakes each at a good hand's width from the plant to form an equilateral triangle with the plant (see fig. 3).

**Step 2** insert guard over the two stakes then place third stake in ground inside the guard to form new triangle with the plant now in the centre (see fig. 4).

**TIP: Angle the stakes, especially the third stake, outwards at the top to gain optimum tension for the tree guard. This will ensure it doesn't blow around in the wind.**

## 6. Mulching

Adding a layer of mulch will keep the water in the soil, and stop weeds from growing. Be careful not to mulch too close to the stem of the plant as this can cause it to rot and die.

## 7. Finishing touches

Check that the seedling is planted deep enough - are all the roots covered? Ask your teacher to give you a score out of ten for your first effort!

Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia License  
[www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au)  
Copyright Owner: Crown in right of the State of South Australia 2021



Fig. 3 - tree guard under construction



Fig. 4 - completed tree guard and lightweight spade

### Contact us

Green Adelaide  
T: 08 8463 3733  
E: [DEW.Greenadelaide@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEW.Greenadelaide@sa.gov.au)  
[greenadelaide.sa.gov.au](http://greenadelaide.sa.gov.au)