

Caring for Your Native Plants



Here are a few planting tips and suggestions...

Keep plugs moist before planting

Because their compact roots leave them susceptible to drying out, it's important that plug trays be kept well-watered and out of direct sun from the moment they're brought home up until they're planted. Make sure to thoroughly water them two to three hours before planting. This makes it easier to remove them from their trays and loosen their roots before putting them in the ground. In addition, by deeply watering the plugs just before planting, they can be removed from their trays and laid in the spots they will be planted without drying out, thus saving time.

Pick your planting tool

If you happen to have a bulb and bedding plant auger drill, that will work great. But, if you are digging by hand, you can use a bulb planter, small spade or hand trowel. The plugs are compact and easy to pop into the ground so you shouldn't need a large shovel. There's a dynamic and complex ecosystem in your soil so try not to disturb the ground as much as possible when planting your plugs.

Push the plug up from the bottom of the tray

Plugs are actually in trays without bottoms. When you are ready to plant, simply push the plug up from the bottom and it should come right out of the tray. Try not to pull the plug up from its top. You risk damaging the crown of the plant and while it might look like fine when you plant it, you might find it wilted and dead several days later.

Determining spacing and groupings

Taking time before planting to determine the spacing of the plugs will ensure uniform density and that your supply of plugs cover the desired area. The plant spacing is really up to you, but don't underplant. Using too few plants in your native garden creates opportunity for other plants like dandelions to move in. Tightly spacing your native plants allows the plants to cover the soil surface and provide support to each other. Generally, you can plan on spacing your plugs between 12' and 8' apart depending on the plant density you are trying to achieve. If you're creating smaller groups of a variety of species, be aware of the differences in mature heights when arranging each group. If planting against a structure, make sure the tallest species are in the back along the structure to ensure shorter species receive proper light.

Planting in the ground and watering in

Plant plugs to a depth that allows the plant's crown to lie at soil level. Backfill soil between the plug and the hole. Water in plugs immediately after installation to fill soil air holes around root systems. Water thoroughly.

Supplemental watering

Your new plugs will require 6 to 8 weeks to establish. In the first week immediately following planting, keep the soil constantly moist, but not soggy. If we've been getting rain regularly and the temperatures are normal, you may not have to water at all. After the first week, reduce watering to weekly intervals, or as required by your particular species of plant. Beyond that, water again only if the soil feels dry.

Proactive weed prevention

Vigilant weed control the first year will ensure effective establishment over the long term. By preventing weeds from outcompeting herbaceous native plants, the plugs will fill in the spaces between plants, resulting in dense stands and few weeds the following years.