

Prehistoric Grass Trees are easy to grow

Ancient plants add atmosphere to the Aussie garden

Xanthorrhoea is a truly ancient tree that can provide interest in the quintessential Australian garden. Only a small number of companies successfully transplant grass trees from the wild. These are registered and approved by the various state parks and wildlife services. All trees sold must carry their registered tag to verify they have not been removed from the bush illegally. They need to be carefully dug.

It is difficult to know whether a tree has been correctly transplanted. Normally these are dug and held in the wholesale nursery for up to twelve months until they display new top growth and roots before being offered for sale. The typical black trunk is due to bush fires.

Planting: It is vital that the site is properly prepared. Excellent drainage is vital and they will not grow in heavy clay soils. If clay soils cannot be improved with plentiful additions of organic material such as compost, rotted leaves, pine needles or coarse river sand, then plant on a raised bed.

Plant your tree in a hole only slightly wider and deeper than the pot. It is preferable to cut the pot off the plant rather than knocking the pot off the plant. Root disturbance must be kept to an absolute minimum. Back fill with a mixture of good soil or compost and the existing soil. The drainage of clay soils can be also improved with the addition of the liquid Multicrop 'Ground Breaker'

Grass trees have a fairly shallow root system with most feeder roots within the top 60cm of soil.

Fertilising: At planting time water in with **Maxicrop Seaweed Plant Nutrient** to encourage new root growth. Keep chemical fertilizers well away from grass trees. Continue to apply the seaweed solution on a monthly basis until the tree is well established. This is usually indicated by new top needle growth.

Flowering: Flowering with the distinctive spear-like spike only usually happens when the tree is over a metre tall. The flower spike is the active growth point of the tree so it is natural the tree to remain dormant and not produce new 'leaves' until a new dormant bud is activated.

Patience is the name of the game with grass trees. Usually grass trees take their own time to flower and it is important not to overwater or overfeed to try and encourage new growth and flowers. A tree with a two-metre tall trunk could be over 200 years old. Native birds and bees feed on the nectar.

Growth: Grass trees have two main growth flushes a year in spring and autumn that coincides with flowering. Plants generally produce flowers each year. Growth of the trunk is only about 10mm a year and can grow up to five metres tall, something for your great-great-grandchildren to look forward to seeing.

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