

## Mulch

Good mulch is a mix of leaves, twigs and bark. It lets water soak in, reduces evaporation, and doesn't hold too much water.

### Mulching tips

- Apply mulch in spring or early summer, before the warmer weather.
- Apply mulch about 5 cm deep. Too much mulch can block water from soaking in.
- Don't pile mulch against the plant stem. Constant dampness can cause disease, and many WA plants prefer a dry surface.
- Avoid sawdust and fresh wood chips—they can tie up nitrogen, affect iron uptake, and make soil water-repellent.
- Compost woody mulches for at least 6 months.
- Avoid mulch from soft-leaved exotic plants—it breaks down too quickly and can add too many nutrients.
- Avoid some packaged mulches that are high in nitrogen and phosphorus (often unsuitable for WA plants).

## Fertilisers

WA plants are adapted to low-nutrient soils, and don't usually need fertiliser. If you do fertilise, use small amounts. Many species are sensitive, especially to phosphorous.

Some plants can benefit from:

- Slow-release fertiliser made for native plants.
- Low-phosphorus and low-nitrogen fertiliser.
- Fish emulsion or seaweed products to support plant health.

Nurseries vary in what they stock, so you may need to shop around. If you want specific plants, order ahead (around September) so they can be grown for autumn planting the following year.



[www.apacewa.org.au](http://www.apacewa.org.au)



1 Johannah St, North Fremantle



08 9336 1262



APACE WA

# Growing Local Plants



## Planting tips from APACE WA

All native plants grown at  
APACE are endemic to  
the Swan Coastal Plain and  
Darling Scarp

### Planting your seedlings

**Dig** a planting hole twice as big as the pot. Fill the hole with water and let it soak in.

**Tap** the top rim of the pot then turn upside down—the pot should come straight off

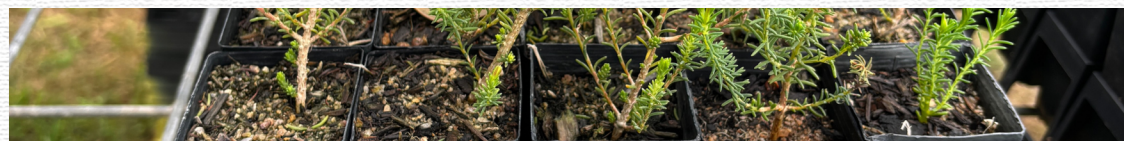
**Place** the plant in the hole so the top of the plant is about 2cm below the soil around the plant

If your soil is native and good quality, you do need to use **fertiliser**. You can add a slow-release native fertiliser (low phosphorus) to the side of where the plant will sit, to support it in the first year. Don't place it under the plant.

**Backfill** with soil and press firmly around the plant so there are no air gaps.

**Water** in well, taking care not to disturb the soil around the plant.

**Mulch** around the plant (keeping clear of the stem by 5cm or so).



## Watering

Local native plants are adapted to our dry climate. Too much water can shorten plant life and encourage diseases. It is better to aim for deep, strong roots—this makes plants more water-efficient and drought-tolerant.

### Watering tips

- Always follow water restrictions.
- Water in the morning. Wet leaves overnight can lead to disease.
- Water deeply, not just the surface. Deep watering builds stronger, more stable roots.
- If the soil is water repellent, use a wetting agent.
- Use higher-flow drippers for thirstier plants (e.g., Boronia, Scaevola).

### For new plants:

Once or twice a week for the first few weeks after planting.  
Once or twice a week through the first 1–2 summers (about November to May), until plants are established.

### For established plants:

During heatwaves

When the soil is dry below the surface (test with your finger)

When plants show stress (wilting, dull leaves, leaf shrinkage)

In general, watering needs of mature plants varies with the soil type, origin of the plant, season and natural rainfall.

### What irrigation to use

Many WA plants prefer a dry soil surface and don't like overhead watering (sprinklers or misters). Adjustable drippers/trickle systems or subsurface irrigation usually work best.



## Pruning

Pruning keeps local native plants tidy and encourages flowering.

### When to prune

Prune after flowering, usually in late spring or early summer.

Avoid winter and mid-summer pruning, which can cause severe dieback.

Light, regular pruning suits young plants; older plants can handle a harder prune after flowering.

### How to prune

Prune to match your plant's flowering habit:

- Flowers on new growth—after flowering, cut stems back to just behind the seed capsules. Regular pruning prevents straggly growth (e.g., Callistemon/Bottlebrush, Pimelea).
- Flowers on old wood—remove some of the oldest stems from the centre, keeping younger stems (e.g., some Melaleuca species).

### Tips for pruning

- Cut branches cleanly at the join—don't leave stumps.
- Remove low branches to make weeding easier.
- Use chopped prunings as mulch.
- Prune soft-wooded plants (e.g., large wattles) lightly—they can die back if cut hard.
- Eucalypts, Callistemons and Melaleucas usually tolerate harder pruning.
- Cut kangaroo paws back to the ground after flowering to reduce black ink disease and encourage new growth.