

## Care Guidelines

### Soil and Mulch

Free-draining soil is essential. Dig the planting holes then fill them with water. If the water is still in the hole after 6-12 hours (very rare) then you need to improve the drainage.

If other common plants are growing well in the soil then there shouldn't be any issues. Do not mix in potting mix with the soil. Do not mix in chicken manure, blood and bone or compost with the soil unless you fully understand what you are doing.

Blood and bone, manure and compost work well put **on top of the soil**. This replicates what happens naturally and creating conditions which are not found as a result of 4 billion years of evolution is general

There is no natural environment where large quantities of organic matter finds itself dug into the soil. In almost every natural environment where life exists, organic matter is broken down through invertebrate and then microbial action and is incorporated into the soil structure.

1 teaspoon of soil contains more bacteria than the entire human population. There are networks of fungi which connect the roots of plants in the soil (and we don't yet fully understand how they work)

This is probably a sign that the microbes are going to do a much better job than you at getting nutrients into the roots of the plants. (\*see end for why you should be nice to your soil)

Bamboo plants love mulch. Start with 5 cm now, while they are small and then when they are bigger increase to at least 10cm. Keep the mulch topped up all around the plant. Use manure and blood and bone covered with hardwood chip. With time this will improve the soil for the reasons above.

### Water

**There is no set amount of water to apply because all conditions and soils are different. The only rules are obviously to make sure they don't dry out whilst avoiding over watering them.**

**Over Watering means** keeping the plants in soggy soil for extended periods. This will deprive the roots of oxygen, causing anoxic conditions which promote the growth of anaerobic bacteria and fungi which usually means disease and rot.

The best way to avoid this is to allow the soil to dry out now and then and to apply water little and often when the plants are establishing.

Aim to keep the soil fairly moist at all times. Make sure the soil around is loose enough to encourage roots to grow into it but unless it has been compacted it is not recommended to dig it over.

Once or twice a week, especially when they are putting up shoots, a deep water is good to encourage downward root growth.

If the leaves curl up then this is a sign that the plants are suffering from moisture stress. This can happen on very hot (and especially windy) days anyway regardless of the water supply.

If shoots start going rotten or things don't look right then the likely cause is too much water.

The leaves below are showing signs of moisture stress and believe it or not within 20-30 minutes of watering would return to normal. Do NOT be alarmed if you see this. Apply water and fast, but not so fast it runs off or drains away before it can be absorbed.



If the leaves remain curled when they are in shade then the plants do not have enough water and you need to look at either supplementing their water supply OR reducing their water needs. Removing excess foliage is the best way to reduce the water needs of plants.

If the plant is still establishing, the soil is moist and the leaves are still curled then it's most likely caused but the root system simply not being big enough yet. If the plants are established then cutting back any culms that are not needed, cutting some down to half the height, trimming the tops off (do you really need a 7m screen or will 5m be enough?) will reduce the number of leaves and reduce the transpiration rate, reducing the need for water.

Once the plant has been rehydrated you may find that you don't need to do this again for some time but keeping a bamboo clump with 50-100 culms is definitely going to mean it needs more water than otherwise.

Large bamboo clumps which suddenly run out of water can dehydrate and drop leaves very quickly.

You may be surprised with just how few culms are needed to provide a screen. Once you get the screen you need then it can be good to remove most new shoots. After about 5 years some of the oldest culms will begin to look a bit shabby. This is normal and they usually die off after 7 years.

The easiest thing to do is to look to see how many culms are looking past it, allow about the same number of new shoots to come up and fully develop the coming summer. The shoots come up in February / March. By April/May they will have reached their full height and will have branches and leaves. At that point you can remove the old culms by cutting them down at ground level.

That way you will still have the same number of culms with leaves and will maintain the screen you need without the plants getting overcrowded

## Fertiliser

The best fertiliser which is readily available that we have used is Osmocote Controlled Release All Purpose Fertiliser which contains trace elements

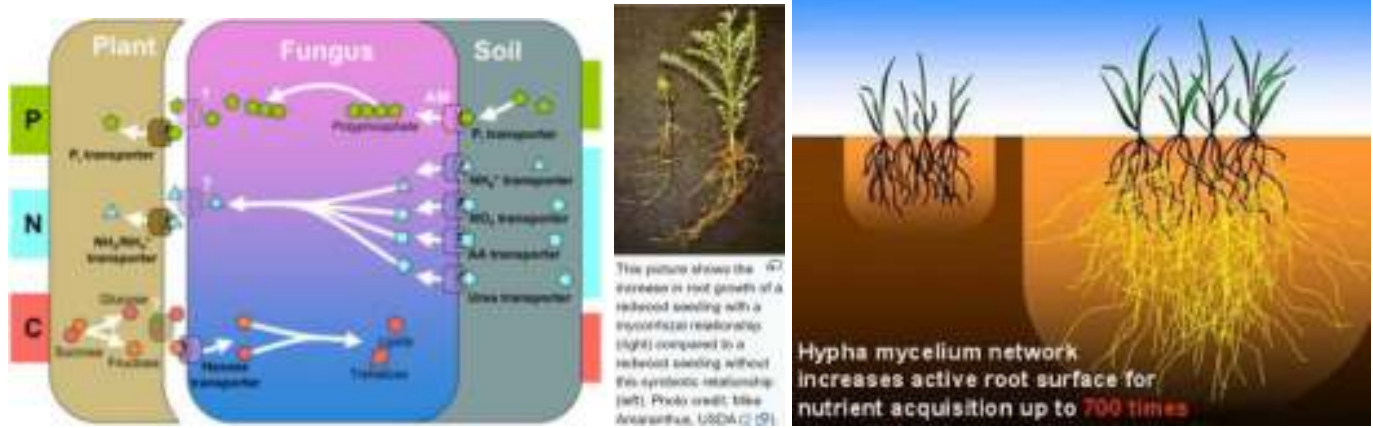
[https://www.bunnings.com.au/osmocote-9kg-all-purpose-landscape-fertiliser\\_p2980016](https://www.bunnings.com.au/osmocote-9kg-all-purpose-landscape-fertiliser_p2980016)

For the 1<sup>st</sup> season it's a good idea to use this by digging it into the planting hole. It guarantees that all trace elements will be available for the plants to establish. You can use it again for the second season if your soil is poor.

From the very beginning organic fertiliser gives good results. Blood and bone, well-rotted compost and manure are good organic fertilisers and should be applied annually to create healthy and resilient plants.

Avoid soluble fertiliser if you want healthy soil, and you REALLY want healthy soil because it contains all the bacteria and fungi your bamboo naturally lives with (symbiotic relationship) and they will do a great job of keeping your bamboo growing and keeping it healthy.

**Soil mycorrhizae (a fungi which connects to the roots of plants for many beneficial reasons)**



## Growth

For the first year they will grow slowly (but still much faster than any other plant).

Shoots may not appear for a few months after they first go into the ground but the plants will be putting down roots and building up stores of energy before putting up their first shoots.

In year 2 they will grow much faster. From year 3 onwards they begin to show the kind of growth rates that bamboo is famous for. You can remove old/small culms (canes) to maintain the vigour and appearance of the clump.

It's recommended to only keep the culms needed for whatever effect you want. This reduces water and nutrient demand and there is no point in having a plant with 100 culms when a plant with 20 culms does the same job.

Similarly putting small plants in the ground now is going to give you the same result as putting slightly bigger plants in the ground in the future (obviously this is not true in all cases but it makes a point)

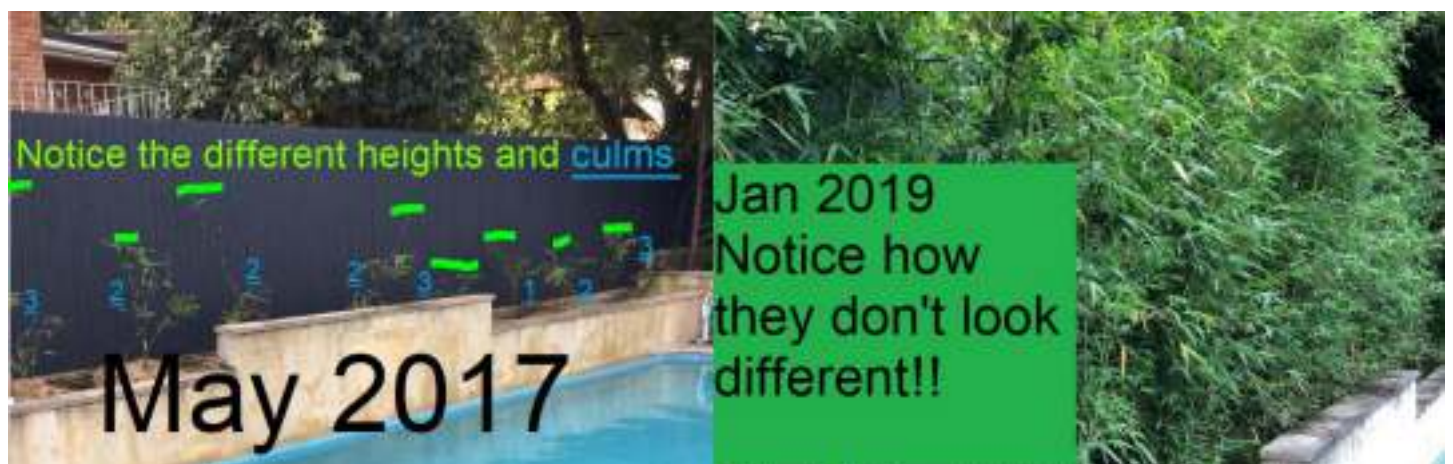
The plants in the next photos were purchased by a customer who called to express disbelief that they would screen anything. Less than two years later the customer took more photos and expressed disbelief in how fast they grew.

The thing to notice is the difference in size of the initial plants and then to notice that you can't notice any difference in less than two years.

This is because in 200mm pots most bamboos grow very slowly. Their roots are restricted and they basically don't want to be in there. They have no adaptations for growing in a plastic pot which contains potting mix and not soil.

Plastic pots and potting mix are completely artificial environments and it is not easy to keep them happy in there.

As soon as the roots get into the soil, the plant's growth accelerates.





# How many culms does each plant have and how tall are they?

It doesn't matter so long as they have culms which are or are putting up shoots which will reach 1.0-1.5m in a 200mm pot. Each shoot reaches whatever height it is going to reach in about 2 months. The diameter of the shoot is proportional to the height it will grow to.

This means a plant which has a 1.5m culm will be overtaken but a plant with a 50cm shoot which is of greater diameter than the 1.5m culm in 4 weeks or so.



## How close should I plant them?

The best way to think about this is that a specific area of land has a specific amount of water and nutrients and a specific amount of sunlight falling on it. One plant that can fill that space will grow faster, taller and with longer branches and more leaves than two plants that end up competing with each other.

Generally Slender Weavers should be spaced at least 1.2m apart. Gaps at the bottom can be filled by cutting new culms down to about 3m just before they start to put branches out. This forces long branches from the thicker, lower nodes.

## Any questions?

Contact us with any questions you have. Send us photos if it helps.

These guidelines have produced consistent good results for us. Once relatively well established bamboo is extremely forgiving of mistakes because new shoots are either coming up or are not far away.

These guidelines are NOT a guarantee and no liability for anything that happens as a result of following these guidelines or not following them is accepted by Sydney Bamboo or anybody else for any reason or under any circumstances no matter what.

Should you have any comments or advice for us then we would be genuinely pleased to hear from you. Whilst we know what we are doing we acknowledge that there are many people in the world who know more about growing bamboo than we do.

Once the bamboo is in your possession then the best guarantee you can find is to take responsibility for what are very easy to grow plants that require minimal maintenance and are tolerant of a wide range of conditions.

To minimise the already very small chance that anything will go wrong it's best to wait for them to grow for a year before experimenting and then to apply changes gradually and wait to observe a noticeable response that can be reliably reproduced against plants which have not had any changes applied.