

# Establishing & Caring for New Plants



## Info Sheet

### The Right Plant for the Right Spot

All of us at Rockledge Gardens are committed to helping you make the best plant choices possible. The more information you can give us regarding the type of plant you want and the conditions you plan to grow it in, the better we can advise you.

If you haven't already done so, please make sure that your new plant is suitable for the area in which you want it to grow. There are a number of things to consider and that we need to know in order to help you select the right plant:

### Size

That cute little shrub you think will look so nice in front of your window might grow much larger than you wanted or expected it to. Let us know how big you want your new plant to get and how much room you have for it to grow.

### Sun or Shade

How many hours of sun will your new plant get? How much shade? Bright light without direct sun? In a screened area? Know as much about the light conditions of your planting site as possible in order to pick the right plant for that spot. When in doubt, check light conditions for that spot every hour or two on your next day at home.

### Water & Drainage

After rain or watering, how long will your plant stay wet? How quickly will it dry out? How close is it to the nearest sprinkler head? How often and how long does your irrigation system run?

Most plants will not tolerate having soggy roots even for short periods of time. When in doubt, dig a hole 18 inches deep and fill it with water. Immediately after it dries, fill it again and let us know how many hours it takes for it to dry out the second time.

### Soil

With proper fertilizing, watering and/or amendments, most plants will do well even in our sandy Florida soil. However, the wide variety of Brevard's soils includes mixtures of shell or coquina, both of which will adversely affect many plants. Most plants will also have great difficulty growing where the soil is hard and compressed. Know your soil conditions! Often, your soil can be improved with the proper amendments. We will be glad to assist you in selecting the best amendments for your soil.

### Salt

Let us know if you live on the barrier islands or if you suspect your well water contains higher amounts of salt. The amount of salt in the air and water is a major consideration when choosing new plants. If you live close to the beach and get salt spray on your cars or windows, let us know. Most plants will not tolerate salt spray on their leaves.

The amount of salt in well water is equally important. Because of the increased population in our area and the growing demands

made of the aquifer, even many mainland wells are becoming increasingly salty. When in doubt, collect a sample of your water in a small bottle directly from a hose, sprinkler head or water



spigot that has been running for about 15 minutes. A free test at our Information kiosk will quickly determine the amount of salt in your water.

### Planting

New plants should go in the ground as soon as possible. If planting must be delayed, water the pots regularly and thoroughly. Don't let the roots dry out!

When you are ready to plant, dig a hole that is wider, but no deeper, than the rootball. The soil at the top of the pot should be level with the ground at your planting site. The bottom of the hole should be flat so that there are no air pockets between the ground and your new plant. (For areas with poor drainage, ask us for special planting instructions.)

When removing your new plant from its container, give the roots a quick check. If they encircle more than one-third of the root ball, cut them back or make vertical slits in the rootball. Carefully place your plant into the hole. Backfill with a 50-50 mixture of the soil from the hole and our Rockledge Gardens Planting Mix (for

# Rockledge Gardens

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plants you are putting into pots, use Fafard Container Mix). We also recommend adding a few cups of Espoma organic fertilizer (ask us for the right variety to use). These two organic products will greatly improve the drainage and quality of the soil around your new plant and stimulate root growth for quicker establishment. Work it into the soil alongside of the rootball while planting and sprinkle some on the surface.

For extra quick plant establishment, we also recommend the addition of all-natural Bio-tone Starter Plus to the planting hole. Not only does it stimulate root growth and bigger blooms, it also improves the overall soil structure.

Finally, form a ridge of soil (berm) 2 to 3 inches high around the edge of the hole to serve as a reservoir when watering. This berm should have a diameter a little wider than the pot the plant was growing in.



## Watering

Even with an automatic sprinkler system, water should be applied by hand to ensure that it is absorbed deeply into the soil. It is a good idea to turn the water down and apply it slowly so that the water does not strike the soil surface too hard and just run off. Watering should be done with a hose to completely soak the soil through the root zone. This is done by filling the reservoir around your tree.

For the first week or two, it is very important for your new plant to be hand watered thoroughly, usually every day. Exceptions include planting in cool weather and plants that don't require daily watering (for example, palms). These sometimes only need to be watered every 2 or 3 days when first planted. Ask us or check Rockledge Gardens handouts for specific watering instructions.

Be flexible with your watering schedule. Feel the soil—if it's wet the following day, skip a day between waterings. Heavy rains will also require cutting back on water. Also, in some parts of Brevard County it tends to stay quite moist during the rainy season so that special precautions must be taken. Ask us if you are not sure.

A general watering schedule for hot weather is: daily for 2 weeks; every other day for the next 2 weeks; and twice a week for weeks 5 and 6. If you don't have a sprinkler system, continue to water twice a week in warm weather. Otherwise, hand water once a week for 2 weeks and then let your sprinkler system and the rains take over.

## Fertilizing

Along with proper watering, regular, measured feedings are the surest way to establish and maintain healthy, vigorous plants. We recommend using the Espoma line of organic fertilizers. Since they will not burn your plants, even if you use too much, a cup or two can be added at planting time.

For all other types of fertilizer, wait until a month after planting and measure carefully. For non-organics, fertilizing is not a guessing game! Too much can burn and even kill your plant. Too little fertilizer is a waste of time, product and money. Always follow product directions for amounts to use. When in doubt, ask us!

## Staking

Some plants may require staking, sometimes for a year or so. Again, when in doubt, ask us.

## Insects & Diseases

We are always available to help with identifying and recommending solutions to plant problems. Most of the time, these problems cannot be diagnosed over the phone. If it was planted by us, we will come out and inspect a problem plant for up to one year after planting. Otherwise, bring samples of the problem for us to see in a sealed plastic bag.

## Landscaping

In-house landscaping consultations are available by appointment with The Master's Touch. Bring pictures and measurements of the areas to be planted. This service costs \$25 with the purchase of a \$50 gift certificate.

For full on-site landscaping services, call our preferred design/landscape operation, Toby Jackson Landscaping (452-2467). Toby Jackson Landscaping offers complete services from landscape design to installation and maintenance.

## We Deliver

anywhere in Brevard County for a fee of \$25 to \$50 depending on your location. We will also plant any item in a 1-gallon pot or larger for a fee.

## Discounts Available

Through our Garden Bug program (see our Garden Bug handout for details or get the information and sign up on-line at our website). Garden Bugs also receive a short weekly email detailing gardening tips and our upcoming sales and events, including our free weekly seminars.

## Visit our Website

In addition to information on upcoming Rockledge Gardens seminars, sales and other events, we also maintain copies of our information sheets on our website: [www.rockledgegardens.com](http://www.rockledgegardens.com)

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## Warranty

For one year from date of purchase, all Rockledge Gardens' plants carry a one-time 50% toward replacement warranty. Proof of purchase is required so *save your receipts!*