

Planting

We have had best results planting in late September or October after rain and after the worst of the frosts have passed. If the soil is very moist and in good condition, there is no need to water the seedlings in at planting time.

One litre milk cartons or similar are necessary to protect the seedlings from late frosts and small grazing animals like hares and rabbits. If the site is prepared well, plant into moist soil, and water the trees in with 2 to 3 litres of water at planting. You should not have to water the trees again.

Post Planting Care

Weeds will always need to be controlled during the initial growth period of the plantings, especially over the first two years. Trees set back by weed competition remain stunted and never catch up, leaving them open to beetle attack and moisture stress. An interesting fact is that a 'weedy' tree line will have access to only one third the obtainable moisture and nutrients until it is established enough to have a strong tap root.

Watering trees in a dry spell (and I don't mean a drought!) is a waste of time and provides false security for the trees as they will expect to be watered instead of sending down roots to look for moisture.

A sickly, stressed tree normally tells you that your site preparation and post planting care was not good enough and there are too many weeds competing with it for moisture and nutrition, or the wrong species have been planted.

Final Word

We get it wrong sometimes. This is only a guide, and will help you to increase your tree survival rates.

Remember the value of our land. A durable and highly productive, yet sustainable property, is ideally what should be handed to the next generation of farm managers. We should pass our land on in better condition than when we purchased it, so it is not too late to start planting.

The most important point with tree planting: do it right and don't cut corners! You will reap the benefits in years to come, and get the satisfaction of seeing your trees growing healthily. Do it wrong, and you won't plant trees again!

John and Michelle



Glen Innes Natural Resources Advisory Committee



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FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

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Sow your Seedlings Successfully - the Lynn Way

by
John &
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Snapshot of John and Michelle Lynn

John and Michelle have run “Blairmore” property for more than 30 years. Blairmore is located 15 kms south of Glen Innes in the Stonehenge area. John and Michelle were founding members of the Stonehenge Glencoe Landcare group, John is a past Chairman of GLENRAC and they have received many awards for their commitment to sustainable land management and conservation.



The starting point

The main way to achieve maximum tree survival is with the Four P's program: Planning, Preparation, Planting, & Post-care.

In the Glen Innes area, it is important that native trees do not to have a growth setback for at least the first two years after planting. A resulting strong tree will be more resilient to beetle and grub attack as well as the harsh climatic conditions we often experience. Adequate site preparation and good post planting care, that is, weed control and tree management are vital.

Planning

You need to plan twelve to eighteen months ahead of planting, keeping in mind aspect, topography, soil type, drainage, wind direction and species selection to suit the particular site and the resultant benefits to pasture and stock.

Shelter belts

The best shelter belt shape for stock protection is a boomerang or horseshoe shape as stock can get inside the curve to escape strong winds and rains. It is vital to consider the value of shrubs as understorey in plantings. Five to seven rows with shrubs planted between the trees are much more efficient than three rows of trees. Fencing will also work out much cheaper per tree.

Shrubbery offers protection and a food source for small birds that are vital to control pests in pastures. If your purpose for planting is shelter, in our opinion, it is a waste of time planting eucalypts alone. In time the wind will tunnel underneath as the trees grow taller offering very little understorey. A mixed planting of trees and shrubs will offer both stock and pasture protection and increased farm productivity.

Native plants are vital components of our ecosystem which is often unbalanced because of over clearing, overuse of artificial fertilisers, and/or heavy stocking rates. The leaf chewing populations of insects can be very high in unbalanced landscapes, compared with populations of parasites and predators (birds, small mammals, and reptiles) that feed on them. Reintroducing natives helps to redress some of this imbalance.

Preparation

Once you have carefully selected the right site, keeping in mind you will have the woodlot forever if it is cared for, the site preparation begins. This is the single most important step in tree growing and is often overlooked.

Prepare your soil for trees as you would for a pasture seed bed with up to 12-14 cm depth. If you get off on the wrong foot, you will always be a step behind. Do it right the first time and you will never regret it. Permanent, long term fencing is a must for a healthy shelterbelt. Domesticated livestock are not the only threat to newly established seedlings!

For black and basalt soils, boom spray with a suitable knockdown herbicide such as glyphosate. Spray at least nine months before planting, then spray the site again four months later. After spraying, cultivate the soil with a tyne to a good depth and this will leave weeds on top of the ground to die.

We used to rip our country but have now gone off that idea as it tends to crack open down the rip lines in hot, dry weather. The agroploough is a good implement to get depth and break up the hard clay pan if you think you have one. The levelling harrow will leave your plot quite fine and even, ready for planting. It is then a good idea to leave the soil settle down for a month or so before planting.

On granite soils and on basalt soils on a slope, you may do a similar program of preparation but with half as many soil cultivations so that soil erosion is reduced. Ripping on granite soils only, can be effective. On one granite site we had a slope and big granite rocks, so it was not possible to mechanically prepare the site. We had tremendous results with just chemical preparation. For an October planting, we sprayed early August (May would have been better!). We sprayed again two weeks before planting, and planted after good rain. We found planting seedlings with just a mattock worked well.

On sprayed ground, the mattock sunk in 12-14 cm with one hit, whereas on unsprayed ground it was dry underneath and the ground very hard.

