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RUNNING BAMBOOS

Running bamboos come in all sizes and many different forms and colors. Taller running bamboos may form nice, open groves if well-maintained and given room to spread. Shorter running bamboos can make beautiful groundcovers from a few inches to a few feet tall.

After planting, running bamboos generally spend their first couple of years establishing and spreading their root system (rhizome). They may show a little top growth during these early years, but new shoots will be much more plentiful in the third and subsequent growing seasons. New shoots appear in the springtime and will usually reach their full height in six to eight weeks. Under good growing conditions, the larger running bamboos will generally reach mature size in eight to twelve years, depending on the species and cultural factors.

SITE SELECTION:

Although most bamboos are extremely drought-tolerant, they will perform much better on naturally moist (or irrigated) sites than on drier sites. Good drainage is also essential for most bamboos, although a few can tolerate waterlogged soils.

One important consideration when choosing a running bamboo is how much room you have. Over time, one plant can spread to cover a large area. A **general** rule of thumb to determine the optimal amount of space for a given running bamboo is to take the maximum potential height of the bamboo and give it this much room to run in any direction. While it is certainly possible to restrict a bamboo to a smaller area, it may not develop to its full potential in such spaces.

Running bamboos will also need to be contained to whatever area you plan on giving them to grow. The easiest way to control a running bamboo is by mowing around the perimeter of the planting. The mowed area should be at least as wide as the maximum potential height of the chosen bamboo in the particular location. Of course this is not always possible, and containment options will vary by site. Other methods of containing running bamboos include rhizome barriers and rhizome pruning, both of which require active management to be successful. Permanent bodies of water and deep shade may also serve as natural barriers.

Proper site and species selection are very important when considering the use of a running bamboo. Under no circumstances will we assume any liability for the use (or

mis-use) of a running bamboo in your landscape. We are available for consultation on species choice, proper siting, and containment options. The following recommendations are based on our zone 8b coastal plain climate and sandy soils. Recommendations may vary for colder areas or heavier soils. Please contact us for more information.

PLANTING:

1. Dig a hole slightly larger than the size of the pot.
2. Place the plant in the hole with the top of the root ball slightly lower than the soil level around the hole.
3. Backfill the hole with a mix of the native soil and mature compost or a good quality potting soil.
4. Water thoroughly to settle the root ball.
5. Mulch around the plant with straw or woodchips to conserve moisture.

WATERING:

Make sure your bamboo has adequate water during the first year while it is getting established. Check it daily for the first month or so, and regularly thereafter. Regular, deep waterings using a soaker hose or drip irrigation are recommended. A good rule of thumb is the equivalent of an inch of rain per week for the first year. More water will be required during hot, dry spells and on drier sites. One sign of inadequate water is leaf curling. Some bamboos will exhibit leaf curling during the heat of the day whether they actually need water or not, but if the leaves are curling early in the morning or after the sun drops in the evening, then your bamboo probably needs water. After the first year, your bamboo should be well-established and will be fairly drought-tolerant. You do not have to give supplemental water to your bamboo once it is established, but it will mature faster and have a healthier appearance if it is watered regularly during dry spells.

Symptoms of overwatering include yellowing/spotting of foliage. This is not usually a problem with in-ground plantings on well-drained sites, but can be an issue with bamboos kept in decorative planters.

FERTILIZATION:

For organic bamboo fertilization, we recommend a generous top-dressing with compost or composted manure in early spring and early fall. We also use and recommend the Espoma brand of organic fertilizers. If using a commercial fertilizer, we recommend a balanced, slow-release fertilizer in spring and mid-summer, and a low-nitrogen fertilizer in the fall. Bamboo can tolerate poor soils and no fertilization, but a little supplemental nutrition will go a long way in terms of growth and appearance.

PRUNING:

Like most cultivated plants, bamboos will need a certain amount of pruning to look their best. The amount of pruning needed will depend on your goals and personal aesthetic preferences. When removing canes, it is generally recommended to cut them as close to ground level as possible.

For specimen plantings, prune out dead canes as needed. Also, once the bamboo has begun to size up (larger-growing varieties), any undersized or unruly canes may be pruned to create an open grove if so desired. Thinning out the smaller canes also allows

light and airflow into the center of the grove, improving the bamboo's health and vigor. For best growth, do not prune out more than 1/3 of the canes in any given year. For some species, it may be desirable to prune lower limbs to show off the canes.

For privacy screens or other non-specimen applications, pruning the undersized canes is not as critical and it may actually be desirable to leave more of them for a better screening effect. To maintain the bamboo as a sheared hedge, prune the new shoots to the desired height each spring. This is best accomplished after the new shoots have achieved full height and are just beginning to leaf out. A light follow-up pruning may be required for any late shoots.

BAMBOO PESTS:

Sucking insects such as aphids, scale, and mealy bugs sometimes infest bamboo. They usually do not harm the plant, but may secrete honeydew, which will cause the growth of black sooty mold, giving the bamboo an unsightly appearance. Available organic controls include insecticidal soaps and neem oil (cool season use only). Unfortunately, we have not found an effective organic control for mealy bugs. They usually require a product containing Imidacloprid or other systemic pesticide to eradicate. This is available in garden centers as Bayer Complete Insect Killer or similar Bayer products (spray or granular).

For most bamboos, these pests are only a minor nuisance and barely noticeable. Although we spray to keep our potted plants free of pests, we don't treat our field specimens because we try to minimize our chemical usage (and leave food for all the beneficial insects!) We believe the best way to minimize the impact of pests on in-ground plantings is to build healthy soil using organic growing methods. Plants that are over-fertilized with chemical fertilizers are more attractive to pest insects and, although they may grow faster, are not necessarily as healthy as organically-grown plants.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR NEW BAMBOO!

**FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US WITH ANY QUESTIONS
NOT ANSWERED HERE!**