

MLG nursery and planting guide

Step 5 – Volunteering: A guide to nursery tasks

We welcome and need volunteers to help out with the nursery – please contribute some time so everyone can benefit from the nursery resources.

Working bees are usually held on the first Saturday of each month, from 9.30 am to 11.30 am. Other days are organised as required, and members are notified by email. If it is hot, there is a marquee in the shed to give shade for volunteers working at the nursery.

Some jobs can also be done outside working bees. Chat to nursery management if you have time to complete some jobs at home or at other times (mlg_nursery@yan.org.au). These jobs include:

- label sorting
- pricking out
- picking up potting mix from Yass (ute or trailer needed).

Sowing

If you are at the nursery on a sowing day, first read the sowing document for each species (see the folder held by the nursery management team). This outlines any pretreatment that may be needed (e.g. hot water treatment and soaking overnight) and if the potting medium is modified with the addition of perlite.

Sowing seeds into seedling trays (for smaller shrubs, grasses and flowers)

- Put a piece of paper in the bottom of a seedling tray.
- Pour Martins Native Seed Planting Mix into the tray, with or without perlite mix.
- Put in four species labels and a label with the date of sowing.
- Sprinkle seeds on top.
- Gently sprinkle more sifted Martins Mix /perlite over the top for bigger seeds, or vermiculite/river sand for tiny seeds.
- Water the box.
- Put the box in the glasshouse beside the shed, or in the hotbox (depending on the time of year).

Sowing seeds into tubes (for larger trees and shrubs)

- Place four species labels into each box/tray, plus a label with the date of sowing.
- Follow the instructions for each species in the sowing document.
- Generally, large seeds (e.g. acacias) are sown about three to a tube.
- Small seeds (e.g. eucalypts) are sown using the smallest pinch per tube.

- Cover the seeds with the appropriate medium. Generally, larger seeds have sifted potting mix with or without perlite, and smaller seeds are generally lightly covered with vermiculite or river sand.
- Water the tubes.
- Place in glasshouse or shadehouse as appropriate.

Preparing boxes of tubes for sowing (trees and acacias) or for potting up seedlings

- Pack tubes into tray holders of 20, or into polystyrene boxes. If using polystyrene boxes, pack tubes in tightly, so that there are no gaps.
- Place the tray/box in the wheelbarrow.
- Pour Martins Seed Planting Mix, or a modified medium as described in the sowing document into the tubes.
- Gently pack soil down to remove air gaps by pushing from above with fingers or with another tube. You can also pack soil by gently dropping the box a short distance.
- Water the tray/box of tubes.

Potting seedlings into tubes

- Make a hole in the soil in a tube using a dibber (or dibbler) stick.
- Lift out plants from the seedling tray with the dibber stick and hold plant by a leaf.
- Try not to expose roots – if possible, leave soil on the roots as you lift. It is best to take out one plant at a time to reduce root exposure.
- Trim the roots with scissors if they are too long to go into the tube.
- Guide roots gently into the hole using the dibber stick, keeping roots as straight as possible.
- If roots are very large it is best to only half-fill the tube with potting mix; hold the tube horizontally with the potting mix along the length of the tube, and lay the roots along the top of the potting mix before gently filling the tube with more potting mix.
- Settle soil around roots and press firmly around the top with your fingers – it is important to get rid of air gaps.
- Top up with more soil if needed.
- Water with a Seasol solution (add about 20mls of Seasol per watering can).
- Add 4 labels to the box showing the plant type.
- Put finished boxes into the shadehouse/glasshouse as appropriate.

Weeding

- Weeding is required around the nursery, and for seedlings.