

SUCCESS WITH WARATAHS

No garden should be denied the beauty of a Waratah in flower. Many of us have tried and failed, but if you adopt a simple set of rules, you can have these fantastic beacons of colour growing in your garden.

WHERE TO PLANT THEM

Make sure you have a soil that will drain freely. A rocky soil will generally do this. Clay soils can sometimes be improved, but if you are not sure, plant your Waratah in a big pot and make it a feature!

Waratahs naturally grow in mostly cool, moist (but not wet), partly shaded areas. For this reason, try to plant it where it will receive morning sun (in summer) only. These plants will literally bake in the hot western sun in the summer. Most Waratahs grow in dappled shade near evergreen trees, so this is an ideal position.

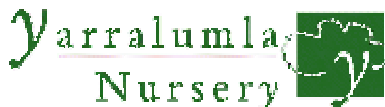
THE BEST SPECIES FOR CANBERRA

Telopea mongaensis and *Telopea oreades* are the most locally occurring species, growing underneath a canopy of forest trees throughout the Mongarlowe area near Braidwood. They develop small, bright red flowers in spring. They are more frost hardy than the Sydney Waratah.

These two species are often bred with the Sydney Waratah (*Telopea speciosissima*) to produce a frost hardy, large flowered plant. Many hybrids will grow well in Canberra, particularly if either of the Braidwood species are the parents.

The Sydney Waratah can grow in Canberra with some frost protection.

HOW TO CARE FOR THEM



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Once you plant your Waratah, water it in thoroughly.

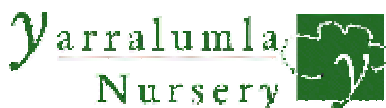
MULCH - The best Waratahs are the ones surrounded by a thick mass (30-40cm) of leaf litter or other mulch. This helps to keep the roots cool and moist. Without this layer of cooling material, the plant will dry out quickly. Remember to keep the mulch clear of the stems.

WATERING - Regular, deep watering (once every four or five days for the first few months, and once a week after that – depending on rainfall) helps establish the plants in their new home. If you have planted under or near evergreen trees, you will need to compensate for moisture loss from the trees. In *very* dry weather, try to water every 3 days or so.

FERTILISING - Do not fertilise at planting. Once plants are established (six months or so) fertilise after flowering with a low phosphorous fertiliser such as Potash, composted cow manure, or a slow release Osmocote or Nutricote for Natives. Avoid fertilising in the heat of summer, when the plants form proteoid roots to protect themselves from heat stress.

PRUNING - Waratahs are best pruned by cutting the flowers off for a vase. Do this when the flower is just after its best. This will give the plant time to grow new leaves before the plant ‘shuts down’ during summer. Light tip pruning to shape the bushes will encourage branching.

CONTAINER PLANTS - Waratahs enjoy being grown in large tubs. They can be potted into larger pots at any time, except mid-summer. Use a pot that is only two or three sizes larger than the existing pot. Fill the tub with a free draining potting mix (please avoid using soil from your garden). Debco’s Acid Loving mix is recommended, as is any potting mix for natives and proteas. Water daily in summer and during hot, windy weather, and once every three days in winter (depending on rainfall). Place the tub in either dappled shade, or morning sun for best results.



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