

Living Willow Rods - Planting Guide

Provided by Kings Barn Farm

1. Willow grows in most soils but avoid free draining soils as willow prefers ground that's wet / moist.
2. Avoid planting near building foundations or drainage pipes - at least 1.5 x the maximum intended hedge height away.
3. Plant at the right time of the year when the willow is dormant— Beginning of December to the end of March.
4. Plant the rods or slips as soon as you can after delivery.
5. Don't plant if the ground is frozen.
6. Willow grows much better without competition ! So clear existing vegetation for at least 0.25m from the hedge using Roundup or similar. For a more eco friendly method lay a mulch sheet along the line of the intended hedge to kill off the vegetation. It's easier to lay the mulch mat if you mow the area beforehand.
7. Use pegs to hold the mulch mat in place or 'slit' the edge of the mat into the ground using a spade or edging tool.
8. Hedges can be planted in single, double or triple rows depending on the required hedge density.
9. Plant each row 200mm apart.
10. Space each willow rod or slip 300mm apart.
11. A metal spike fractionally larger in diameter than the willow rods is the best method for making a hole for planting.
12. To plant rods, push the metal spike 12" into the ground, and as soon as you withdraw it, insert the willow rod. This is especially true if you're making a hole through the mulch mat with the spike as it's all too easy to 'lose' the hole under the matting.
13. Don't slit the mulch mat as the extra gap you create will only help grass and weeds to get a hold right next to the willow.

14. By holding the willow rod 12" up from the bottom of the rod when you insert it into the hole you'll be sure it's not been set too shallow.
15. Don't force willow rods into the hole as it may damage the bark and decrease the chances of success. Use a larger diameter spike if necessary, ensure the hole is not collapsing as the spike is removed and that the willow rod is not being inserted at an angle.
16. Tread the soil in around the willow to ensure the rod is bedded in. If you are using a mulch mat you won't be able to see if the rod is a snug fit in the hole or not, so tread in regardless.
17. Give the willow a good watering after planting.
18. Cover the ground either side of the hedge with mulch to keep the moisture in and to keep the weeds at bay. Even covering a mulch mat with mulch, helps and also improves the aesthetics.

Planting willow is easy as long as you are careful. It's immensely rewarding seeing the results of all your effort in the spring as the setts start sprouting. Please see our guide on how to care for willow to ensure your work results in healthy and long lasting willow hedges, fedges or structures.