

Barfad Willow

Planting living willow: some basic guidelines.

Although willow rods can be planted from late autumn to late spring it is best to plant them as early as possible so that the roots can form before the rods start sending out shoots.

Willow can tolerate some shade but it will not grow well in deep shade; it will eventually die cack altogether if there is no sun at all. Most soil types are tolerable. Water is essential so watering in dry weather is recommended with new plantings, however waterlogged soil is not advisable.

Cut rods must be stored with their butt (thick) ends in water. A bucket will do, or a stream if it is available. If possible keep unplanted rods in the shade or they may start growing before you are ready for them.

If the soil is very dry give the soil a good soaking a few days before you plant the rods. Always plant the butt end in the ground. Short cuttings should be pushed in about 20cms, longer rods about 30-45cms. Generally the drier the ground the deeper the rod should be planted. Where we live in the West of Scotland the rods just need to sniff the ground and they start growing!

It is essential to prevent all grass and weeds from growing around newly planted rods. We use black plastic dug into the soil for anchoring. Mulch mat, old carpet, bark chippings, or straw would also do the job. When using black plastic cut the butt end of the rod diagonally and then push it straight through the plastic into the ground. If the ground is hard use an auger or metal spike and a lump hammer to make a pilot hole first.

Good luck and happy planting!

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