

A close-up photograph of Southport heath (Drosera rotundifolia) showing small, white, five-petaled flowers with prominent stamens, surrounded by dense, green, succulent-like foliage. The image is used as a background for the title section.

PLANTING GUIDE FOR SOUTHPORT HEATH

Natural populations of Southport heath grow in exposed coastal heathlands. They thrive in soils that are well drained and relatively nutrient poor, and are adapted to full sun and strong coastal winds.

To grow successfully Southport heath in your garden you should try and mimic these conditions.

THE RIGHT SITE AND CONDITIONS

Well drained soil can be sandy loam to clay loam. If the soil remains wet / waterlogged in winter or after heavy rain events, it isn't suitable.

Relatively nutrient poor is a soil that is not overly enriched by previous additions of fertilisers, rich compost or manure. If your soil is rich enough to grow a good vegie patch it is probably too high in nutrients.

Southport heath grows well in **full sun** but it will also thrive in partial shade. Coastal **wind** is not vital – simply choose a site that has good air movement.

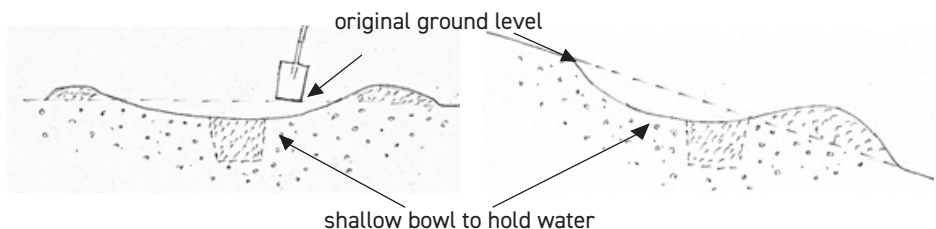
Soils must be free of root-rot fungus. If you know that root-rot fungus is present on your site – do not plant Southport heath.

Water your plants a few hours before planting. Make sure the roots are wet.

Scrape a shallow bowl (50cm diameter x 5cm deep) where you want to plant your seedling. Place the scrapings on the downhill side of your bowl to build a small dam.

Dig a hole in the centre of the bowl (spade depth by width is ideal). Break up clumps and place the excavated soil next to the hole for backfilling.

Water the planting hole **if conditions are dry**.



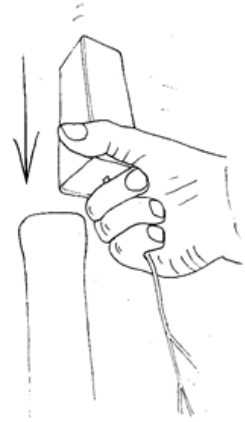
TAKING THE PLANT OUT OF THE POT

1. Turn the tube on its side, place your index finger and thumb around the tube and your fingers around the stem of the plant. **Do not pull the plant out by its stem.**



2. Turn the tube upside down and tap the rim on a solid object to ease the rootball out. Giving the sides of the tube a light squeeze first may help.

3. Take a look at the root ball. The ridges inside the tube will have prevented the roots from circling around and instead encouraged them to grow down to the open bottom where they are pruned by the air – initiating new roots to grow. Note that there is no need to 'tease out' a perfectly good root system.

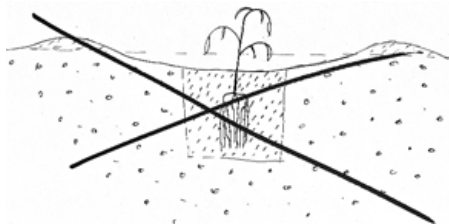


Plant the seedling in the centre of the hole so that the top of the root-ball ends up 1-2 cm below finished ground level.

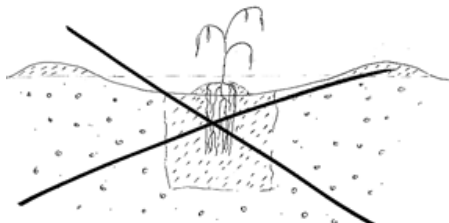
Backfill with the loose material dug from your hole, pressing it down with your fingers as you go to eliminate any air pockets and to achieve good root-soil contact. The soil around the root-ball should be firm but not compacted.

Water in with a watering can or a water-breaker at the end of a hose to provide a few litres (depending on soil moisture). If planting in dry weather, water immediately after each planting.

THE FINISHED PRODUCT



Too low. The root-ball is too deep and the stem may be prone to collar rot. Heavy mulching right up to the stem can cause the same problem.



Too high. The root-ball is above ground level, making the plant unstable in the wind and prone to drying out.



Just right.

- Seedling in centre of a shallow depression
- Top of root-ball just below ground level
- Planted in a good size hole
- Firmly backfilled with friable soil for good root-soil contact
- Watered-in

Tree guard: If there are browsing animals at your site, set up a tree guard to protect your seedling until well established. Mesh is good for airflow and allows tip pruning by wildlife as the plant grows.

Mulch: Rock, gravel or coarse wood/bark mulch is best to maintain soil moisture and reduce weed competition. Ideal mulch depth is 75-100mm.

Watering: If planting in autumn, maintain soil moisture until the winter rains. The following summer check for soil moisture when it gets dry (away from the plant under the mulch). If the soil is dry (50mm below surface), give a thorough watering every 3-4 weeks over the hottest part of summer. After that the plant should be able to cope without watering unless there is an extreme drought.

Regular **tip pruning** will help maintain a compact bushy plant, and keep competing **weeds** at bay.



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