

EUCALYPTUS PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

BARRIE COATE

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Procedures which we use to produce what we feel are some of the highest quality eucalyptus trees grown in containers are as follows:

The first step is to obtain the highest possible quality fresh seed, wherever possible from isolated seed trees of superior characteristics for a given species.

The second step is to plant the seeds in rows 1" apart in screen-bottomed seed flats filled with a mixture of 30% coarse peat moss and 70% coarse perlite — from mid-February through June. After the seed is sown, it is covered with fine screened sand to provide a dry, open medium around the germinating seeds. Germinating requires one to two weeks.

These screen-bottomed flats provide a labor-free root pruning when the root-tip gets to the open air, thus encouraging many lateral roots, which do not require much root pruning during transplanting to liners.

They are standard 18" × 18" × 2" wood flats with no bottom boards. We attach 1/8" galvanized hardware cloth to them to form a bottom, with 1" × 1" pieces along two sides to hold the flat off the bench.

Since such a branched root system exists at this point there is little transplant shock and no root binding as they go into 2 1/8" × 3 1/8" Fertil-Pots, 3 to 4 weeks later.

The peat moss-wood fibre Fertil-Pots allow a narrow, deep root system consistent with the needs of most tree species at this stage.

The next transplanting into 1 gallon containers is done 3 to 4 weeks later, as soon as a thorough root system shows through the side of the pots. The plants would be from one to two inches tall at that time.

Our next step is into 5 gallon containers in another 4 to 12 weeks, depending on our needs. These 5 gallons, which were seeded in February or March will be saleable, 6 foot trees, with a solid root system and 5/8"-3/4" caliper by October or November.

We find the best response, in every stage, from transplanting plants which have vigorous, young, actively growing root systems. We cull out the genetically inferior individuals vigorously at every stage. We feel this results in economy in not trying to maintain plants which will not be of top quality later on.