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# NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (VIC) GALLIPOLI OAKS PROJECT

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## HORTICULTURAL GUIDE

The best way for students to recognise the importance of this commemorative Gallipoli Oak is for students to be involved in its care from the beginning. We hope students will feel a sense of ownership and responsibility for the tree. These tips should help them to care for their Gallipoli Oak.

For more help, check out our video online: 'How to plant and grow a Gallipoli Oak'

### Contents

1. Siting the tree within the school grounds
2. Preparing the site
3. Preparing the planting hole
4. Planting the Gallipoli Oak
5. Watering
6. Installing the tree guard
7. Do you really need a stake?
8. Mulching & fertilising
9. Installing the plaque
10. Ongoing care

### 1. Siting the tree within the school grounds

This species of tree comes from the Mediterranean region, which covers a vast area of southern Europe. The distribution of this particular species is from Palestine through to Spain. The Gallipoli Oak grows in dry soils, sometimes even in rocky soils, so your tree will need a place with good drainage and ideally full sun.

Gallipoli Oaks are slow-growing trees. Depending on your location, it may take 20 years for your tree to reach 5 metres in height, and 50 years to reach 10 metres tall. The canopy will be a similar width. Avoid placing the tree near buildings to minimise root problems. You can prune the tree in winter if you have limited space.

This is a commemorative tree, so you might consider giving it a special place in your school grounds. The foliage can be quite prickly, so avoid pedestrians brushing past it. It is also a very young tree, only two years old, so it will need some protection from playground games. For example, flying basketballs accidentally bouncing onto the young tree could break its stem! Find a place for your tree where it will be able to grow safely for many, many years.

## 2. Preparing the site

You might consider cordoning off a small area for this tree well before it arrives. Preparing the area by loosening the soil and applying some mulch will show students that this is a place specifically set aside for this important event. You might consider whether your garden bed needs a small fence. Your choice of fence will depend on where in the school grounds the tree is located. Remember to include a space to enter the garden bed, or a gate.

Don't forget to Dial-Before-You-Dig: phone "1100" or visit <http://1100.com.au/>

## 3. Preparing the planting hole

Your planting hole is the most important factor in establishing a healthy Gallipoli Oak. It will dictate the growth of your tree over the next 10 years.

a) Dig the hole:

- As deep as the pot
- Two to three metres wide – yes, really!

Gallipoli Oaks do not have a tap root, they have a root plate that spreads radially from the trunk. This is why you need a very wide, shallow hole with rough sides. Smooth sides will make the roots circle around.

b) For heavy clay soils:

- mix 4-6 handfuls of gypsum into your 2-3 metre wide hole.

c) The planting hole should be filled with water the day before planting:

- Allow this water to drain overnight.
- This is how you can tell if you have good drainage.

## 4. Planting the Gallipoli Oak

a) Remove the tree from the pot:

- Place one hand over the pot with the stem of the tree between your fingers then tip the pot upside down. The tree should come out easily.
- If it does not, simply tap the rim of the pot once, upside down, on a solid object to dislodge the root ball. Soil will spill out, so do it near the hole.
- While the tree is still upside down, gently put your other hand on top of the root ball and turn the tree the right way up, keeping both hands in place – one on the root ball, and the other on the top with the stem between your fingers.

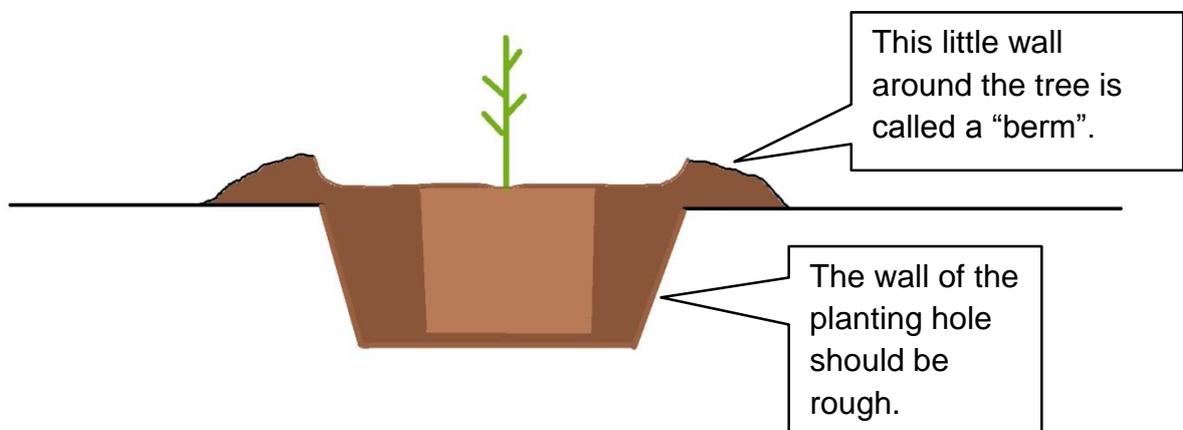
b) Place the tree in the hole:

- The tree goes in the centre of the hole, on the firm bottom of the hole.
- If roots are visible on the outer root ball, tickle the root ball to gently loosen them from the soil.

- Check to see that under the root ball no circling roots are present. If so gently tease them out and gently try to straighten them leading away from the root ball.

c) Backfilling the hole:

- Use the soil that has been removed from the hole.
- It is best to establish new roots of this tree in your schools native soil.
- The hole should be loosely backfilled with soil, level with the height of the pot. Make sure the visible roots are only just covered.
- Make a “berm” to concentrate water on the roots whilst the tree is establishing.



## 5. Watering

Water your tree as soon as it is planted:

- Water the plant from the side of the hole with a very gentle spray. This will take care not to wash any soil away from the root system.
- One or two watering cans (9-18 L) should be enough for your 2-3 metre hole.
- The amount will depend on your soil type, but just make sure your entire planting hold is moist.

Check the soil moisture at least weekly, or more often during summer.

## 6. Installing your tree guard

Your Gallipoli Oak will be delivered with its own tree guard – a length of black-coated wire mesh approximately 60cm high. Use some zip ties or twist ties to create a circular tube-shaped tree guard. Make the tube as wide as possible. You want a large diameter so your Oak has lots of space inside the guard.

Use three 90cm wooden stakes to hold the guard in a triangle shape around your tree. Make sure the branches are not caught in the tree guard, but are free to grow.

## **7. Do you really need a stake?**

You Gallipoli Oak should be strong enough to stand alone, and you want it to continue to be strong enough to support itself. We suggest that you DO NOT tie your Gallipoli Oak to a stake.

If you do have to stake your tree, the stake should NOT be placed within the root ball, but well outside the root system of the plant. Use sisal or jute string to tie your tree to the stakes. Any ties to the plant should be loose enough to allow plant movement in the wind. The sisal or jute will break down eventually, and avoids the tie cutting into the tissue on the trunk of the tree.

## **8. Mulching & fertilising**

Mulch will shade the soil, diminish weeds and eventually break down to aid in soil structure. From time to time, mulch may need topping up. Your local Council may be able to supply bark chips or wood chip mulch.

A wetting agent may be of some value and should be incorporated as per directions.

Products such as “Plant Starter” contain hormones such as IAA, and NAA and are plant growth regulators. This product will assist in the development of roots for the tree. The directed rate of 24 ml per 9 litre watering can is desirable.

## **9. Installing the plaque.**

The tree will be delivered with a commemorative plaque; it will be etched black flat stainless steel, 10cm tall by 20cm wide.

A few days before your tree planting, you might:

- a) dig a small hole (e.g. 25cm x 12cm x 12cm deep) approximately one metre from your planting hole, fill with pre-mix concrete and smooth the surface, or
- b) dig in a small concrete paver or decorative stone.

Smear clear silicone on the concrete surface and position the plaque on top.

## **10. Ongoing care**

The tree will need monitoring over next few years. How about nominating students monitors from each class to take turns watering and removing little weeds? Does your school have a gardening club that can be responsible for the care of the tree?

Students might like to measure and plot the growth rate of the tree from planting date for a one or two year period. This project could be shared by a cluster of schools in a region, comparing growth rates of different trees in different soil types. You would need to record when and how much you are watering the tree too! There are only four Gallipoli Oaks known in the state, so we are interested to know how fast they will grow in the many different regions of Victoria.