

## TREES FOR BEES CORNER

# GETTING READY FOR WINTER: PLANNING YOUR BEE FEED PLANTING



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While winter may seem some time away, now is the time to be planning your bee feed planting for 2016.

To have the best chance of success you should have a clear idea of what you want to achieve, whether it's purely bee feed, or whether it also incorporates factors such as shade, shelter, riparian protection, food and aesthetics. You also need to consider the location of your planting—including distance to your apiary—and how much area you have available to plant.

*Planting is for all the family.  
Photo courtesy of Kintail Honey.*



In terms of bee feed, you need to know what time of year you are planting the bee feed for, so that you can select the appropriate species of plants, and keep your autumn/winter feed close to the apiary sites. The Trees for Bees website has lists of suitable plants, and your local nursery or farm planting advisor can help with what grows well in your area.

It is also time to start thinking about preparation for planting—any fencing or tree guards required, weed and pest control, specific plant locations, and the choosing and sourcing of plants. Fencing requirements can range from permanent fencing where stock or other grazing animals are to be permanently excluded, through to temporary electric fencing where grazing or browsing is allowed once the plants are established. Fencing might not be required where there are only a few plants, and instead tree guards can be used. These can range from Combiguards to protect from rabbits, to tree sleeves to protect from sheep, up to large timber tree guards to protect from cattle and horses.

## Weed and pest control

Weed control prior to or at the time of planting is important so that any grass or weeds don't smother the new plants and compete for any moisture. There are a number of options including grazing the area late summer so the grass is short come autumn, and then spot spraying where the plants are to be located, before or after planting.

Other options include blanket spraying the area to be planted, and then planting a ground cover species to keep the weeds down. Pest control is also very important,

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as rabbits, hares, possums and goats can do significant damage to newly planted trees. You may need to poison or shoot any pests, and be prepared for ongoing pest control.

### **Plant location**

Plant location is important in getting the spacing between plants right, as you want the plants to be able to grow in the open to their full size without being overcrowded. This helps maximise flowering, and most plants flower more in the sunlight unless they are specialised shade plants. If you are in a dry

area and have limited opportunity to irrigate, then look at those areas that are still showing some green at this time of year. Mark the site with a stake so that you can identify it when it comes to planting. Use a mix of plants—some to flower in the first year (e.g., herbs and shrubs), while others such as oak and maple trees may take a number of years to first flowering.

Finally, stage the planting over time—only plant what you can manage, including ongoing maintenance.