



Bamboo must be given ample water, fertilizer (organic rotted animal manure does particularly well), and protection from competitive weeds if it to become established quickly. Some initial protection may be required, depending on the site, so that your plant gets off to the best possible start (drying winter winds may do initial damage until the plant is established).

Planting New Bamboos

Bamboos are happiest in a soft friable soil. If your existing garden soil is heavy you should add good quality organic material. Dig the material into the soil where the bamboo is to be planted and spread 2 or more inches of mulch in the area immediately around the bamboo where you want it to grow. Bamboo is a tight clumping plant and is naturally mulched in the wild by its own falling leaves keeping a mulch over the roots and rhizomes. As such it is best not to rake or sweep up the bamboo leaves from under the plant as they keep the soil soft. A low growing shade tolerant groundcover plant that will allow the leaves to fall through to form a mulch without being visible will work if you find the dry leaf mulch objectionable. Almost any organic material is a good mulch. We personally use well rotted animal manure however we would stress that you need to be vigilant for any new emerging weeds. Should you not have the luxury of a great deal of time a good layer of bark mulch or chipped tree branches should be used instead.

Winter protection

Bamboo should be planted outdoors early enough to become established in their new position and be allowed to harden off sufficiently to survive their first winter. If the bamboo is planted late in the year, a good layer of mulch should be laid to provide extra protection from any cold and drying winds.

Yellowing and falling leaves

In the spring there may occasionally be considerable yellowing of the leaves, followed by leaf drop. This is natural and should not cause concern, as bamboos are evergreen and naturally renew their leaves in the spring. They should loose their leaves gradually as they are replaced by fresh new ones. In the spring on a healthy bamboo there should be a mixture of green leaves, yellow leaves and newly unfurling leaves. Remember, any leaf drop acts as an ideal natural mulch and should not be tidied up at any time.

Watering

Newly planted bamboos require huge volumes of water when planted initially. If it is particularly hot or windy then daily watering would be advantageous during the first growing season. Once a bamboo has reached the desired size, it can survive with much less watering and will eventually require very little at all. But until then you must water-and-fertilize copiously to achieve optimum growth. Well established bamboos are rather tolerant of flooding, but newly planted bamboos can suffer from too much as well as too little water.



Keeping Bamboo in Containers

Many bamboo plants will grow quite happy in pots or containers and therefore can make a very attractive feature on a patio or terrace area.

Keeping bamboo plants permanently in pots or containers is very different from growing them in the ground. It is more labour intensive due to the increased watering regime and the possible need to repot once the plant has outgrown its current pot or container.

The other point to keep in mind when planting a bamboo in a pot is that it is more exposed to winter frosts. In colder areas of the UK (like NE Scotland) it is worth considering winter protection by either wrapping the pot with fleece or moving to a sheltered location during the winter months.

The Best Bamboo for Keeping in Containers

Although most bamboo will grow successfully in a container if properly cared for and looked after, the best ones to choose are the tight clump forming varieties such as the 'Fargesia' species or ones which are only moderately invasive. The very invasive species can grow so quickly filling the pot with lots of circling rhizomes and strangle the plant or split the pot. Our favourites for pots include:

- Short growing bamboo - *Shibataea Kumasaca*, *Sasaella Glabra* 'Albostriata' or *Indocalamus Latifolius*
- Medium growing bamboo - *Fargesia Rufa*, *Fargesia Murielae* 'Simba', *Fargesia Murielae*, *Fargesia Robusta* or *Fargesia Nitida*.
- Taller growing bamboo - *Thamnocalamus Crassinodus* 'Kew Beauty', *Phyllostachys Aurea*, *Phyllostachys Aureosulcata* 'Aureocaulis', *Phyllostachys Aureosulcata* 'Spectabilis' or *Phyllostachys Nigra* 'Punctata'

Tips for Keeping in Containers

- Choose as large a pot or container as possible (retains moisture better & allows for future development)
- The ideal pot will be wider than it is tall (to allow the plant to expand sideways). Minimum 20L pot volume for small bamboos and minimum 60L pot volume for medium-tall bamboo.
- Feed potted bamboo with a slow release fertiliser.
- Keep well watered - don't allow to dry out but don't allow it to become waterlogged. Prolonged drying out can result in browning foliage or loss of foliage.