



How to plant your Global Garden

There is now an enormous choice of plants available in the UK that will thrive in our changing climate. Many have originated from much warmer countries overseas and are available in nurseries specialising in Mediterranean, sub-tropical, and exotic plants located all various counties. Check out the listings on the links page - do e-mail hello@globalgardening.org if you know of any others.

These nurseries will have a wealth of knowledge about growing overseas plants in our changing UK climate so tap into this expertise before you make your final selection of plants.

TIPS TO GET YOU GOING

Remember that hotter, longer summers and wetter shorter winters can still be accompanied by the occasional very cold snap.

The tolerance of drought loving plants to colder winter temperatures is affected by many factors such as wet cold, dry cold, sudden cold or sustained chill along with the aspect of your garden. Think seriously about what plants you choose if you have a north facing garden. This will get less light and sun during the winter which means this can become a cold spot within the garden and hardiness can be very unpredictable

Think about the following when purchasing any Mediterranean or Tropical plants:

The age and size of the plant - smaller, less established plants may not cope with severe conditions, but older more established plants although may make a faster impact, can take longer to settle when planted and can be harder to look after during this period as they can be more demanding. It may be better to choose a plants which are, say 2-3 years old (as a guide) which will give you some instant impact and allow you to see your garden to grow and establish.

·Ask the nursery what are the recommended lowest temperatures that the plant you are thinking of purchasing can withstand. It may survive over winter if you plant it in a sheltered spot or if you cover it in afleece or surround it with a sturdy but very fine netting to form a wind break. Plants that cannot withstand our lower winter temperatures must be brought into a conservatory or greenhouse from October to May.

Remember to think about the fact you will have to lift and move containerised plants. Think about weight and space available for over-wintering. It is also a good idea to visit any open local gardens to see what is growing and ask the staff if they have had any problems with certain plants.

Ensure that there is good drainage over winter - planting in pots is always a good idea for hotter summer temperatures but remember containers will need watering more often. Plants which may survive happily in the ground may be more tender when in a container as the soil in a container can freeze solid during prolonged frosty periods. You need to have a good layer of drainage material in the bottom of containers and a water retentive compost mixture, to avoid the need to water too often. Often it is prolonged wet and cold conditions that induce rotting to tropical and exotic plants.

Some tropical plants will need to be in pots such as agave and bananas so that they can be brought into a frost free environment or be wrapped in fleece for protection

DESIGN IDEAS

- To create a sub-tropical feel use mainly evergreens mixed with some plants that will die back every year like herbaceous plants that have bold, green or variegated leaves which mimic the tropical climate. These include cannas, melianthus and arum lilly.
- Closer planting of sub-tropical plants can help create a micro-climate that allows more tender plants to be under-planted as the larger plants affords some protection to the plants from more extreme cold and damp.
- Consider which tropical plants need to be planted in pots so that they be brought into a frost free environment or be wrapped in fleece for protection over winter.
- Wind protection in the form of large evergreen trees or hedges will help form a micro-climate and allow sub-tropical plants to survive the winter, but you must remember they will be challenging for available water and nutrients.
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PLANT SELECTION

Here is a brief description of the different categories of plants that are suitable for Global Gardening:

TEMPERATE PLANTS - these originate from the zone between the sub-tropics and the polar regions where there are distinct seasonal changes which range from warm to cold temperate zones. These plants will survive in the changeable English climate as they are able to adapt to extremes of temperature.

MEDITERRANEAN PLANTS - are a wide variety of colourful and often scented flowers from the countries surrounding the Med such as Spain, Greece, Italy, Turkey. These include lavenders, thymes and geraniums that survive in bright sun and drought conditions but dislike wet, cold winters and can be damaged by prolonged frosts.

The next groups of plant offer year round interest as they are mainly evergreen . They are ideal for gardeners seeking something dramatic and inspirational but will only flourish in well protected gardens where they can transport you to an overseas paradise with their exotic flowers and architectural forms

TROPICAL PLANTS - these originate from between tropics of Cancer and Capricorn where the weather is very hot - normally above 68 degrees (20C) and the high humidity encourages lush plant growth. If grown in the UK these plants will need winter protection and lots of spraying with water to create humidity in hot summers. Examples are members of the banana family (musa), Hedychium (ginger plant), Alocasia (common name of elephant's ears due to its large glossy leaves).

SUB TROPICAL PLANTS - these come from the area between the tropical and temperate zones with slightly lower temperatures normally between 50 and 68 degrees F. Many sub-tropical plants will survive our climate with the care and protection during the winter months(as described in How to adapt your Garden)

and includes plants such as cannas, cordylines, phormiums and arum lilies to name a few.

EXOTICS - are normally plants from very hot, humid environments such as the Caribbean, South America which are strikingly unusual and colourful. In the UK they will only survive outside in exceptionally hot summers and mild winters - otherwise they are better grown in a greenhouse or conservatory. They include bird of paradise , orchids, hibiscus and bougainvillea which are normally grown as conservatory plants.

LEARN MORE

There are excellent books that you can read to discover more about these plant categories:

New Exotic Garden by Will Giles plus

The Encyclopaedia of Exotic Plants for Temperate Gardens

Palms won't grow here and other myths: warm climate plants for Cooler areas by David Francko

Architectural Plants by Christine Shaw

Tropical Garden Design by Made Wijaya

Tropical Garden Style by Alan Helmsley

The Tropical Garden by William Warren

The Mediterranean Gardener by Hugh Latymer

PLANTING TIPS

- Don't go rushing to the garden centre to buy huge quantities of drought -tolerant plants but start with just a border or maybe even a few plants to see how you get on with growing them and if they survive
 - Choose the sunniest spot in your garden so that plants will have maximum chance of growing to full capacity
 - Ideally plant in autumn or spring and never in full sun - early morning or late afternoon is best to give the plant time to settle.
 - Ensure the pot is moist before you remove the plant
 - Dig a deep hole for each plant, fill it with re-cycled rainwater and allow it to drain before planting into the hole to ensure that roots have a moist surrounding.
 - Once everything is planted mulch the border with gravel or bark up to approx 75mm deep to give a true Mediterranean or Tropical feel.
 - Sub tropical plants will need a feed in spring of pelleted chicken manure and regular feeds of general liquid fertiliser during summer
- Sub tropical plants with large fleshy leaves will need regular watering and to be sprayed with water to keep them healthy.

Banana basking in the September 07 sunshine at Great Dixter Exotic Garden, East Sussex

