

ALL ABOUT BAMBOO

Information sheet

Bamboo is a versatile and important part of the economy and culture in many countries. Here at Wide World Importers, we import a variety of home décor products made from bamboo. But if you want to add a tropical flair to your garden as well as in your home, try planting one or several of the many varieties of bamboo used for landscaping.

There are two different categories to consider, depending on the look you want to achieve and the amount of maintenance you're prepared to do: clumping and running. The running varieties sent out underground runners which can show up far from the parent plant. They can be easily contained using either the trench or barrier methods described below. Runners are ideal for hedges or screens. Clumping bamboos have very short root systems, expanding no more than a few inches per year. They are less cold-hardy than runners, but make excellent specimen plants.

MOVING TO A NEW HOME

Bamboos grow best in a moderately acidic loamy soil. A forest plant, it's best if mulch is kept over the roots and rhizomes. Grass makes a good mulch, since it's high in nitrogen and silica, as does chipped trees or manure (as long as it's not too hot). Bamboo can be planted any time of the year in areas with mild climates.

A newly planted bamboo requires frequent and liberal watering, twice a week or more often during hot or windy weather.

To control spread of any of the running bamboo varieties, install a barrier of at least 30 inches deep. Tightly compact the soil next to the barrier to discourage deep rhizome growth.

STAYING HEALTHY

- Do not rake or sweep the bamboo leaves from under the plant, as they provide an effective mulch to keep the soil soft and moist.
- If you dig a trench to control running bamboo varieties, check it each fall to see if any rhizomes have tried to cross it. If so, cut them off.
- Stake tall and slender bamboos.
- In the spring, there is excessive yellowing of the leaves and leaf drop, which is normal for the growth cycle.

KEEPING BUGS AT BAY

MITES

Bamboo mites, not to be confused with spider mites, cause stippling with yellowish centers throughout the leaf of the plant. With magnification, you can see the webbing and the mites themselves on the underside of the leaves, which is where they prefer to suck the juice from. The main problem with mites is visual. For minor infestations, it's possible to control by spraying with insecticidal soap or an approved miticide.

MEALY BUGS

These can be an occasional problem on clumping varieties, and can be controlled by injecting dimethoate directly in the culm. If you prefer not to use this method, you can try submersing the entire plant (assuming it is potted) in water for 12-24 hours; long enough to kill the bugs but not enough to harm the plant. Since bamboo is native to floodplains, they are able to tolerate immersion fairly well.