



## *Sage Advice from the Roundhouse....*

### Planting Strategies for N A T I V E S

*When installing natives, care must be taken to ensure that the plants remain healthy and become "established." There are several strategies you can use to achieve good results:*

◆ *First and foremost, planting at the appropriate time (in the fall through early spring) is key to plant survival. This allows the root system to become established during the cool, rainy season, well before the harsh summer months.*

◆ *A thick layer of a coarse organic mulch around the root zone of the plant (away from the crown), is also highly recommended to maintain constant soil temperatures and moisture, and to suppress competition from weeds.*

◆ *Amending soil is rarely necessary, but in the case of extremely poor,*

*heavy (clay) or compacted soil, use a well-composted, organic amendment to replace 1/3 of the native soil in the backfill.*

◆ *Dig the planting hole twice as deep and twice as wide as the plant container to break up the surrounding soil.*

◆ *Pre-irrigate the planting hole by filling it with water and allowing it to drain (this is a good method to check the drainage of a given area).*

◆ *Set the plant crown one inch higher than the soil level so that moisture drains away from the stem. Tamp backfill in gently.*

◆ *Create a considerable watering basin with remaining backfill and fill with water. Allow to soak in and repeat twice.*

◆ *Fertilizing native plants is generally not necessary, but in the case of extremely depleted soil or older unproductive plantings, cut the rates of all-purpose, ornamental plant foods in half and apply in the cool season.*

Never amend a clay soil with sand. The large, coarse, heavy particles actually worsen drainage conditions when combined with heavy soil and moisture. Potting mixes containing synthetic material such as perlite, vermiculite, and supplemental nutrients should also be avoided. These materials do nothing to improve soil conditions over time, and do not allow for a smooth transition into the native soil. Amending soil with composted organic material is recommended for planting natives. As it breaks down, the humus it contains binds with soil particles to actually improve drainage conditions over time.

**PLANTS OF EL CAMINO REAL**

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