

Coconut growing guide

On arrival



Soak your coconuts in seaweed solution as soon as possible. Seaweed solution will strengthen the plant and will help protect it against disease and pests. Keep in a shady position and soak for a minimum of 1 hour, up to 1 day. All plants will have their coconuts still attached to the plant as the nut provides the plant with nutrients for up to 2 years. Do not attempt to remove the nut. Roots are often removed to prevent disease and rot, and this does not harm the plant. New roots are already being produced and will soon be visible through the husk.

Planting

Your new coconut can be planted in pots or straight in the ground. In either case, a shady position should be provided, at least until the plant has re-established itself. The first few fronds may be less healthy looking and less vigorous than the already existent fronds, this is normal and should be expected. Once fronds look healthy and growth is vigorous, you can adjust it to its final position.

Coconuts are best grown in a position with an average temperature between 20 and 30 degrees, and humidity above 70. Growth is slowed down when temperature falls below 21C, although they can handle temperatures below that. They cannot handle frost, and may not set fruit in cold climates. Coconuts are highly resistant to salty soils and wind.

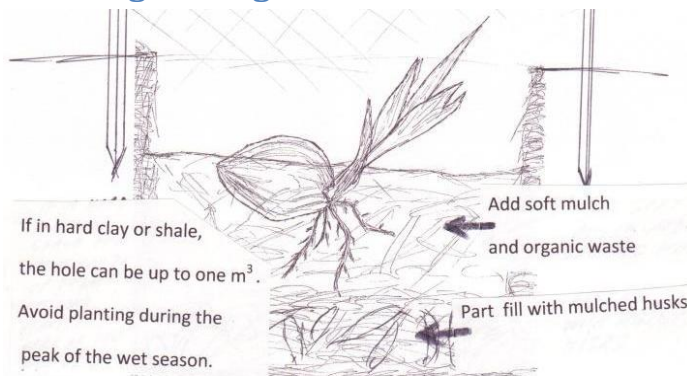
Growing in pots

This is our recommended planting method for all areas outside of tropical regions (average temperatures below 20 degrees). Pot your plant up in a big pot (10-100L) for at least the first few years. The pots need to be big enough to fit both plant & nut. Select a well draining soil and water the plant regularly.

Feed them with a slow release fertiliser or organic alternative, and mulch the top of the pot to keep moisture in. Place the pot in a shady position until the plant has established itself, after which you can slowly adjust it to a different position if required.

Make sure the soil is rich in organic matter; dig through some good compost or other organic matter. Plant your plants below ground level to encourage a deep, low root base which increases stability. Protect plants from livestock and pests. See planting picture below.

Growing in the ground



Your plant can be planted straight into the ground if you are in a tropical climate, meaning your humidity is above 70, and average temperature is between 20 and 30 degrees.

Dig a very large hole and part fill it with mulched husks, sugar cane or other mulch. Add soft mulch and lots of rich, organic matter. Make sure the soil is well draining. If it is not, dig through lots of sand to improve drainage.

Coconuts need an annual rainfall of at least 1m. If your annual rainfall is below 1m, you will need to provide additional water. Plant your plants below ground level to encourage a deep, low root base which increases stability. See planting picture above. This will also keep fruit at a low level for a longer period of time. Avoid planting at the peak of the wet season if you are in a tropical area.

Provide shade for your plants, and protect them from livestock etc. by fencing them off. Fertilise regularly with a good quality NPK fertiliser for tropical plants or an organic alternative. Dwarf coconuts are generally self-pollinating so they can be grown fairly close together (4-5m) without the risk of cross pollination.

Results & harvest

Dwarf coconuts



If growing conditions are at their best, dwarf coconuts can flower in their 3rd year, and fruit in the 4th year, giving 160-250 fruits a year. They would reach full output at 6 years of age, often with coconuts touching the ground. They will continue to grow very slowly to 5-12m high.

Dwarf coconuts are precocious, meaning they mature very quickly, while still being very young. E.g. they grow slowly but fruit early. Dwarf coconuts tend to be sweeter than tall coconuts, but do not live as long (40-60 years). They are also not as stable, which is why they should be planted below ground level.

Best picking time is around day 220, when sugar levels are at their highest. Once picked, a fresh coconut will remain sterile inside, and continues to deposit flesh for up to 8 weeks if not bruised or allowed to dry out.



Tall coconuts

In best conditions, tall coconuts can start fruiting at 8 years of age. They are much longer lived than dwarf coconuts, 80-120 years as opposed to 40-60 years. Talls also tend to be more stable than dwarf coconuts. They are usually more suitable to commercial coconut production.

Tall coconuts are more cold hardy, making them more suitable to gardens outside of tropical areas. Best picking time is around day 220, when sugar levels are at their highest. Once picked, a fresh coconut will remain sterile inside, and continues to deposit flesh for up to 8 weeks if not bruised or allowed to dry out.

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