

BAMBOO INFO:

Bamboos are giant members of the grass family. They are evergreen, and are divided into either runners or clumpers. In our climate, there are only a few clumpers that will do well.

Clumpers generally stay where you put them, but they are limited in size and do not easily provide the privacy or screening potential that the running types do. If you have a small or formal garden, consider using clumpers, or put your bamboo in a large container. However, if you need screening, or want a large hedge, runners are definitely the way to go. They thrive throughout our area, range in height from 12 to over 50 feet, fill in to make a hedge in two to three years, and are easily controlled with annual maintenance (planted in the ground). There are over 200 varieties of hardy northern running bamboos. No matter where you want to plant bamboo -- from shady swamp to desert mountaintop -- there is a bamboo that will grow there.

When designing a screen or hedge consider first the finished height. Most northern bamboos are large. If you want to stay under 20 ft, you must select an appropriate variety. For rapid growth do not purchase bamboos in smaller than 5 gallon containers. Plant these at 5 ft intervals and expect to see the hedge fill in three to four years. Mature height will be reached in 5 to 9 years.

Bamboo sends up new shoots for about six weeks each spring. These culms grow very rapidly, reaching their full height during this six week period. From that point on an individual culm does not get any taller, it just gets more and more leaves, doubling its leaf mass every year. Each year's culms are considerably bigger than the year before until mature size is reached.

Very little soil preparation is required. Bamboo is a surface plant. Plant even with the surface you see in the pot. It is very important to keep native grasses from competing with the newly planted bamboo. Fertilize with any sort of high nitrogen mix. Lawn fertilizer is perfect. Relax, the first year, nothing much will happen -- the second spring will be interesting -- the third spring, stand well away from the plant.

Control is not a problem if you consider bamboo to be the equivalent of a large tree. It wants to be a grove-- a grove thirty or forty feet wide. Thinned and maintained this may surround a hot tub or gazebo. It will dominate a small yard -- much like a large tree.

Old canes should be removed from the grove or hedge each winter. This opens up the grove to light, and stimulates the plant to send up new shoots. Bamboo sheds its old leaves in July. Occasionally leaves first turn yellow and then drop forming a beautiful mulch in the grove. By August the plant has grown two new leaves for each one shed and is greener and fuller than ever.

recommended reading:

- [THE GARDENER'S GUIDE TO GROWING TEMPERATE BAMBOO](#), Michael Bell
- [BAMBOO FOR GARDENS](#), Ted Meredith [THE BAMBOOS](#), F.A. McClure

FOR CONTAINERS

Installation:

- Relatively little soil preparation is necessary before planting bamboo.
- Bamboo will thrive in almost any soil type, from clay to sand. You can work in a little manure or compost. Bamboo loves nitrogen like all grasses. Remember, bamboo is a surface plant: it will stay for many years in the top foot of whatever you plant it in. *Decora Bamboo* has been successfully grown on solid rock by simply surrounding the root balls with a couple of bags of composted steer manure.
- Eventually mature groves will have two feet or more of subsurface root structure, but a good deal of this develops in layers of composted bamboo leaves dropped over many seasons on top of the original soil surface.

→ When you first take the bamboo plant out of its container, you have a decision to make. Bamboo suffers greatly from 'pot memory.'

- **If** you want your bamboo to spread out rapidly and begin to fill in a larger area (usually this is done for in-ground planting), then you must cut away or straighten out all of the roots and rhizomes which are curling around the inside of the pot, including the bottom of the root ball. This is tough to do, but necessary. Use a reciprocating saw, a handsaw, a machete, or a hatchet, and be brutal -- shave off a half inch or more everywhere.
- On the other hand, if control is a primary concern, then by all means plant everything just as it comes out of the pot. It will take several years for the bamboo to realize that the pot is no longer there.



- Plant the top of the root ball even with the surface of the soil. Bamboo is a surface plant. Avoid competition from other grasses.
- For hedge installations, planting at three-foot intervals is recommended for a continuous screen in three years, or five-foot intervals if you can wait another year. Larger root balls planted tightly together can produce instant privacy **BUT** can be difficult for containers. Ensure that the container isn't packed without any room for the bamboo to grow in.

****remember:** bamboo can grow through concrete. Give your bamboo room to grow and **DO NOT** stuff bamboo plants into a planter, with no room for new growth. It will compromise the planter.



(planter from TOP view)