

'How to use' guide for Ornamental & Decorative Barks supplied by Playbark.com

Several considerations need to be assessed before selecting a specific bark, these considerations include:

- Budget
- Best Value
- Longevity
- Aesthetics

- **Budget:** Fortunately, when you purchase a product from Playbark.com, we have an extremely large range of products and are confident we will have a product which suits everybody's budget.

By selecting a more competitively priced product, this does not necessarily determine this product is more inferior compared to the more expensive products sometimes they are simply cheaper for us to produce and distribute.

- **Best Value:** This is a principle followed by many Local Authorities. Everybody's garden is different, if one particular bark suits one area it may not all together suit another.

By having a more expensive product, in certain circumstances this may prove more cost effective than a less expensive product if the lesser priced product isn't suited to a certain application and has to be regularly replaced due to the product bio-degrading faster.

- **Longevity:** The principles stated above readily apply here, however sometimes a bark product is only needed for a short space of time so a less expensive product may suffice. For example with a new planting scheme, the requirement maybe simply to allow the shrubs to achieve establishment and for the bark to biodegrade in to the soil structure which obviously is beneficial in itself.

The longevity of the products all differ and certainly are dependent on the depth of the bark applied, we advise a minimum application depth of 50mm (2"). Although we provide guide lines with regards to the life of the product, if it is exposed to extreme conditions such as windy sites or footfall it obviously won't last as long.

- **Aesthetics:** It is important to clarify, all of the products will be functional, they will all offer certain levels of beneficial 'mulching', which in essence achieves the following:

>Weed Suppression.

>Moisture retention within the soil structure.

>Soil improvement (as it slowly biodegrades).

>May assist in certain pest eradication.

With this in mind, we all have different tastes and therefore one person may prefer a specific type of bark whereas another person dislikes it, it is all about personal choice.

At Playbark.com we are certain we have a product which ticks all of the boxes, combining functionality with appearance whilst falling in line with budget.

If unsure, please ask for samples.

The Creation of a new planting area.

Drainage:

It is essential the area which is being considered for use as a planted area has good drainage, if it doesn't, irrelevant of the bark purchased the area will become muddy, it could even flood which will be a sure way to waste money.

If the drainage is poor, handymen and DIY enthusiasts may be able to install a simple 'Herringbone' drainage system without costing the earth. Good examples can be viewed on YOUTUBE.

If this is one step too far, we suggest you talk to a reputable landscaper or ground worker.

Weed Removal:

Annual and perennial weeds ideally should be removed from the proposed area, not only are they unsightly but they will also compete with the plants for moisture, nutrients and light.

Removal may be performed manually by hand or chemically by applying a proprietary brand of weed killer, please read the label carefully if adopting this method.

Soil Types & Plant selection:

This process can be quite tricky as certain plants require different soil types. Ask at a reputable plant nursery or garden centre for advice regarding the soil conditions the specific plants enjoy or similarly check on a reputable website.

In fairness although our bark products are all on the 'acid' side of neutral the effect this has upon PH (acidity and alkalinity) is very minimal, however please consider, the application of modern compound and blended fertilisers may slightly increase acidity over time.

Please Note: Our Ecoplant product is an exception to the rule and is not suitable for lime hating species!

Soil Conditioning:

The incorporation of good quality organic soil conditioning products can massively improve the soil structure and as a result can increase quicker plant establishment as well as improving moisture retention and nutrient uptake properties.

If there are likely to be lime-hating plant species within the planted area, consider our Fine Grade Composted Bark product <http://www.playbark.com/content/fine-grade-composted-bark>

Alternatively, if after careful analysis a product with less acidity is required consider Ecoplant <http://www.playbark.com/content/ecoplant>

Fertiliser:

Dependant on the soil condition, it may be worthwhile applying a 'pre-planting' fertiliser to encourage establishment. There are numerous proprietary products on the market to choose from and purchasing from a reputable garden centre who can advise upon product selection is always advised.

Landscaping Fabric/Membrane:

This is a very cost effective method in preventing the majority of weeds from emerging within a planted area.

Simply lay the fabric over the prepared area for planting and cut an 'X' configuration in it, large enough to plant the shrub through whilst allowing the folds to lay back down at ground level to ensure weed suppression.

Landscaping fabric will last for many years and is extremely effective. Being porous, it will allow moisture to pass through it into the soil structure.

<http://www.playbark.com/content/landscaping-fabric-weed-control-membrane>

Rubber Edging:

Ultimately, a planted area needs to start and stop, with this in mind to prevent the bark and soil from spilling onto paved or lawn areas, it is good practice to use an 'edging' product which is not only effective but is aesthetically pleasing.

Tanalised timbers can be used quite effectively, but for something 'softer' to the eye why not consider our Rubber Edging. A wonderful innovative idea, which provides a cost effective yet functional solution.

<http://www.playbark.com/content/rubber-border-edging>

After Planting:

Once the preliminary works have been completed and the shrubs have been planted, it is at this stage the bark is applied.

Taking care to avoid the planted shrubs, liberally place the bark on the planted area, ensuring even coverage and making sure the bark is placed right up to the main stem of the shrub to achieve maximum effect.

Once the bark has been laid on the area, water thoroughly and repeat this process every few days (more so in dryer conditions).

The bark will settle over approximately 30 days and will find it's own true level.

Ongoing maintenance:

Even though the application of quality bark products will suppress weed growth by up to 80%, it is inevitable the occasional annual and more so perennials weed will germinate and become visible within the planting area.

Either remove the weeds by hand ensuring the root is also excavated, or if using a proprietary systemic weed killer as a spot treatment, ensure you follow the correct safety procedures as stated on the label.

Dependant on the depth the bark has been applied at will determine how long it will last before the emergence of weeds become more prevalent.

Carefully raking the bark on the bed will assist in disturbing weed seeding establishment as well as cosmetically providing the surface with a fresh appearance.