



An excerpt from “The road to full production”

Zespri Orchard Productivity Centre

Secrets of success

Geoff Thorpe from Riversun says that summer planting of potted vines is “a whole different ball game” compared to planting out dormant bare rooted vines. He offers some tips through the planting process:

1. Site preparation is key! Ensure all contouring, drainage, nutritional balancing, artificial shelter construction, post, wire and irrigation installation is completed before the first vines arrive.
2. The vines will be sun hardened outdoors for 10 days before delivery and thoroughly watered pre dispatch. Be sure to hold the pallets of vines in a sheltered, shady spot and keep well-watered until planting.
3. Your nursery can arrange vines to be delivered on an as-required basis – do not stockpile vines for more than 2-3 days.
4. Thoroughly soak the planting zone 6-12 hours before planting and the potted vines 4-6 hours before planting (water must be seen running out of the bottom of the pot).
5. Mark the planting position, apply a ‘soft’ fertiliser like blood and bone to the marked spot (just ahead of the hole drilling machine).
6. Drill an oversized hole - the auger will thoroughly mix the fertiliser- do NOT place the fertiliser in the hole after drilling unless you are willing to mix it into the soil thoroughly before planting - this prevents root ‘burn’.
7. Lay out the vines just ahead of the planters - they are top heavy and will fall on to the ground and the undersides of the leaves will get sun-burnt if left out for more than 10-15minutes – even on a cloudy day.
8. Carefully remove the plastic bag, place the plant in the hole with the surface of the potting mix flush with the surrounding soil - then firm the soil around the pot, but do NOT stand on the potting mix itself as this will seriously damage the roots.
9. Hand water the planting site of each vine no more than 5 minutes after planting (eg. spray tank with hose attached) - this is critical as it fills the air spaces and sets up the capillary action between the surrounding soil and the potting mix. The soil will settle 2-4cm after watering in, so pull some more soil over the top of the soil mix - this helps conserve moisture in the soil mix. Potted vines are thirsty and on a warm summer day will soon empty the potting mix of the water it had pre-planting.
10. Install a new 2m bamboo stake beside the stem (100mm out from base of the vine) and tie to the cordon wire – you will need this because new growth will push out from the top of the stem within a week and need support to get to the canopy wire.
11. Turn irrigation on as soon as an irrigation block is planted - no later than the first evening after planting - thoroughly soak in, then maintain optimum soil moisture levels for the rest of the summer. New roots will move into the surrounding soil within a week.

Post-planting, it is key to keep plants secure so they cannot move in the wind or be knocked around by machinery or people. Secure them strongly to a bamboo stake to make them less vulnerable – they have a lot of work to do! We’ve also talked to a few growers who’ve found that the tapener tape they used to secure vines to the bamboos doesn’t always pop off, and can strangle vines if left on too long. Make a note to check for this later on.

Weeds are the enemy – protect the plants at all costs so they don’t rob precious nutrients and water – and get spray guards in place. Water is liquid gold at this stage. Let a large amount of water soak deep into the soil, instead of watering little and often. Dig a hole to check how the moisture levels are going - a scuff with a boot is not enough.