

## Recommended Planting & Care Guide

Congratulations, you are buying the best quality terracotta pots available. All handmade from the finest natural clay, fired to 1200 degrees C, followed by a water bath that hardens the terracotta making them extremely resistant to frost and weather damage.

But, as with any natural products you need to treat it with respect and care and it will reward you with many years of pleasure, aging to perfection like a fine wine and delighting the eye every time.

### **Location, location, location**

First choosing the right location for your Cretan terracotta is paramount. They should never be stood directly on the soil as the porous nature of the clay means it will act like a sponge soaking up water, which in winter months could freeze and cause cracking. Place the pots on paving, gravel, concrete or another hard surface and if possible, use the terracotta feet we supply to raise the pot off the ground slightly.

### **Drainage**

Every pot we supply, other than the fibreglass lined for interior use, will have a drainage hole in the base. It is essential to keep this as clear as possible to ensure good drainage so no excess water is retained in the pot, which could freeze, causing cracking during the winter. The best way to do this is to use the expanded Hydro-Clay drainage medium we sell in the base of the pot prior to planting. Adding a good few cms of Hydro-Clay in the base will keep the drainage hole clear from roots and allow excess water to drain naturally by gravity from the soil. Finally, placing the planting on our terracotta feet will raise it from the ground giving even more clearance for draining. For indoors, make sure to select a fibreglass lining and put Hydro-Clay in the base to create a drainage layer helping to prevent roots standing in wet soil if the pot is overwatered.

### **Planting**

Always use premium quality compost for planting, ideally John Innes, peat free mix No2 or No3 (2 for bedding, temporary plants, 3 for long term bush, shrub, trees.) A heavier soil than other peat free or indeed, peat-based mixes, it works wonderfully well with the terracotta allowing good exchange of moisture and gases, keeping the plants healthier. Ideally use one of our Tanker irrigation sub soil tanks placed 5 – 10cm under the root ball which has many health advantages for the root system, preventing water stress and creating less work for you as the number of times you need to water the pot is more than halved compared to not using the system. See our Tanker PDF for full details.

One plant we never advise using in our pots is bamboo – the root system is so vigorous it will quickly block up the drainage holes and multiply with such force inside the pot that they will eventually crack the pot and burst out.

### **The Winter and General maintenance**

Most of the time, winter conditions pose no real problem to our pots due to the special firing process making them extremely resistant to frost and freezing. However, if a very hard frost is forecast and prolonged period of freezing conditions, then it is sensible to protect your plants by wrapping the pots in bubble wrap or other insulating waterproof covers which will not only prevent

their roots freezing, but will also help ensure the earth in the pot doesn't freeze solid. Even with all the precautions outlined above, if by chance there is still too much water retained in the pot, frozen soil could still damage the terracotta.

The appearance of your terracotta pots changes very quickly from their new unplanted state, so don't get too hung up on how they initially look. The natural patina they develop during their interaction with the environment around them is all part of the beauty of buying a natural product, and while it can be cleaned off to some extent using brushes and soapy water, it's not recommended. Better to let your pots age gracefully and create that true Mediterranean atmosphere.

1. We advise adding around 4 – 6 inches (100mm – 150mm) of Light Weight Expanded Hydro-Clay Pebbles to the pots before adding compost. This will improve drainage and aeration of the roots, as well as adding frost protection as there will be no sitting water in the base of the pots. We sell Hydro-Clay separately at £24.99 per bag. One bag would be ample for all size pots and you will have spare. This can be kept for future pots or added to existing pots and can also be used as a decoration around the base of your plants etc...



2. We recommend using a soil-based potting compost when planting your plant.



3. Unless you have purchased a planter that we have reinforced to be able to move it whilst full, we recommend not moving the planter once planted up as the combined weight of the soil and the plant may damage the planter.

