

Podocarpus - Care Guide

Introduction



Since we are dealing with a large genus of very varying hardiness it is difficult if not impossible, to make sweeping generalisation. Where podocarpus plants are tender or tenderish this has been made clear.

Therefore these comments are largely reserved for the most commonly grown and popular Podocarpus hybrids which are very largely crosses between the very hardy *P.lawrencei* and the equally hardy *P.nivalis*. They certainly do not apply to the more peculiar Podocarpaceae relatives.

Propagation

Podocarpus are easy to grow from seed providing those which are dioicous (i.e. where you need separate male and female plants) have a 'mate'. Seed should be sown in February.

Podocarpus are also (in the main) very easy from cuttings. These should be taken in August or September when the new growth has matured but not fully hardened off. Rooting is quick and it can take as little as 4 months before you have rooted cuttings to pot on.

This is much quicker than for most evergreens (eg. camellias) which take 6-8 months to callous and root properly.

Podocarpus Salignus - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/Z5yOkVD4ybs>

Pests And Diseases

Apart from the risk of cold winters to some of the Chilean and South African species Podocarpus are as risk free as almost any genus. This again may be due to the resilience and hardiness which results from their nodular root systems.

Like all conifer Podocarpus are very susceptible to spray drift but that's about it.

Even the Cornish rabbits don't seem to want to chew them but that may alter with time.

Growing Conditions And Soil Type

All Podocarpus have nodulated roots. These nodules contain organisms involved in 'fixing' nitrogen thus enabling the plant to flourish in situations where nitrogen is deficient. In the case of *P.lawrencei* and *P.nivalis* this means mountains and rock slopes.

Most of the commonly grown Podocarpus are therefore very easy to grow even in the poorest soil conditions. Like all conifers they will not tolerate chalk but they will grow in conditions which see extremes of cold and dry weather. This makes them pretty 'bomb proof' for the average English garden.

Full sun or partial shade are fine providing they can bring the best out of the coloured foliage which the plant has to offer. Greens will also do best with some shade but the coloured leaf forms perform best in full sun as you would expect. *P.totara* and *P.acutifolius* seem to prefer semi shade as they grow on forest margins.

In theory Podocarpus like well drained soil but, as we have found in Cornwall where our rainfall is 55 or so inches, this need not be taken too seriously.

Pruning

As with so many evergreens the rule of thumb is 'don't' unless you have to keep them under control beside a path or in a border.

The lower growing podocarpus are best pruned with clippers or shears and it doesn't really matter when in the year this takes place

If you prune in July or August you may well encourage a flush of secondary growth bearing the same exciting colours as on the spring new growth.

If you prune in September or October you may well get a good or better flush of new growth in the spring but, conversely you may well be cutting out the attractive fruits.

Uplifting Crown - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/Zn9K0Fy6Q9E>

Uses In The Garden

The best choice of varieties for :-

- a. Windbreaks for Underdraft - *P. nubigenus*, *P. 'Young Rusty'*, *P. 'Flame'*
- b. Foliage for Flower arranging – *P. salignus*
- c. Hedging – *P. acutifolius*. *P. 'Clarence'*
- d. Tubs and Patio – *P. 'Country Park Fire'* *P. Otari'*
- e. Ground Cover – *P. lawrencei* 'Blue Gem' and many others
- f. Rock Gardens (in lower rainfall areas) – most forms of *P. lawrencei* and *P. nivalis* but especially *P. 'Otari'*
- g. Fruits – *P. 'Young Rusty'*, *P. 'Clarence'*, *P. 'Blue Gem'*
- h. Foliage Colour – *P. 'Country Park Fire'*, *P. 'Kilworth Cream'*, *P. totara 'Aureus'*, *P. 'Blaze'*



Podocarpus acutifolius



Podocarpus 'Blue Gem'



Podocarpus 'Blue Gem'



Podocarpus 'Blue Gem'



Podocarpus 'Chocolate Box'



Podocarpus x 'County Park Fire'



Podocarpus falcatus



Podocarpus henkellii



Podocarpus henkellii



Podocarpus henkellii



Podocarpus macrophyllus 'Aureus'



Podocarpus matudae



Podocarpus matudae



Podocarpus nivalis
'Livingstone'



Podocarpus nivalis
'Livingstone'



Podocarpus nivalis
'Livingstone'



Podocarpus 'Red Embers'



Podocarpus 'Red Tip'



Podocarpus 'Red Tip'



Podocarpus salignus



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Further information on the [Podocarpus collection at Caerhays](#)

Further reading and images in the [Caerhays Garden Diary - Podocarpus](#)

Podocarpus Elongatus 'Blue Chip' - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here https://www.youtube.com/fcr_f3FdYCA?start=100

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