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## GREEN SIDE UP

Working in a native plant nursery, I have heard of some pretty interesting ways people have killed their newly purchased native plants. Sometimes it's due to not knowing what to do, while most times it's actually due to kindness. When we bring new plants back to our homes we want to do the best we can for them. After all, it's another life to nurture and help grow, something like a stationary new addition to the family. So we dig a nice big hole, add lots of organic matter and a good helping of expensive fertiliser. We gently place the plant into the hole, firm the soil around it, water it well and two weeks later we try to figure out why it has gone all yellow and lost half of its leaves. Unfortunately its demise was the result of good intentions.

You see, the best way to kill natives is to give them more fertiliser than they actually need. So it was really the fertiliser in the hole and the added organic matter that most likely led to its demise. The good thing about natives is that they don't ask for much. Good drainage, enough to drink and a layer of mulch is all that they need. Another common cause of death for native plants is the practise of teasing out the roots. This may be fine for some European plants, but our natives will complain bitterly if you disturb their roots. After all, they have delicate, super-efficient roots which have evolved to extract

nutrients effectively from our nutrient deficient Australian soils. If you're worried about buying a root-bound plant, there is a simple solution.

Ask the nursery staff to show you its roots by removing the pot from the plant and if you see a mass of roots wound around the inside of the pot, simply choose a younger plant. When removing pots from plants, never grab plants and pull them out of their pots. Always remove the pot from the plant. If this makes no sense to you, come to Yuruga Nursery and have a staff member to demonstrate how to do this.

This brings me to the final point, no, you can not plant them while they are still in their pots. Some people have actually tried this method with, predictably, very unfavourable results. At first the plants will just sit there and grow very slowly as the roots try to make their way out of the pot via the drainage holes. But finally they will die, strangled by the tight plastic collar around their base. Unfortunately, I'm not kidding, I've seen this done before.

Planting natives is a simple activity and its best kept simple – just remember - green side up.

# Renovating A Modern Home

There are a number of things you need to do before considering a home renovation, the first and probably the most important is to objectively list your home's pros and cons. For instance, is it light or dark? Are there privacy issues? Is the roof and guttering in good condition? Is the entrance attractive? Are the rooms spacious? Should anything be addressed structurally? What are the kitchen and bathroom like? It is advisable you engage a design professional who will work through your list. You can decide what you can and can't afford, what is too hard and what is workable.

Fundamentals are first – plumbing and electrical. Before you call a plumber, decide whether you will add an ensuite, remove the bathroom or add a dishwasher. Such issues need to be addressed and drawn up beforehand. With regards to electrical work, you need to decide whether you will add air-conditioners, lighting, power outlets or external lighting as these will need to be wired up before cosmetic work like plastering and painting can begin. If your home is block, try to disguise it by rendering or cladding all over or at least in part. It makes a huge difference to the overall appearances and helps update the exterior of your home. If there is exposed block work inside, try to disguise it with gyprock or paneling at least in the high focus areas or feature walls.



Stylish bathrooms and kitchens are now major prerequisites on buyers' lists but don't go overboard. If you are renovating a modest home, don't choose expensive appliances and stone bench tops. Balance is the key and if you are considering resale, keep the various areas of the home in harmony with each other.

If possible increase the size of the main bathroom and ensure there is one bath in the house and one walk-in shower. Keep bathrooms stylish, simple and spacious with good lighting and ventilation. If you can add an ensuite to the main bedroom, do it – even a small one with shower, basin and toilet. Again good design comes into play and a good architect or interior designer can work wonders.



Decide on floor finishes as these colors will influence your interior colours and finishes. Modern homes are about broad open spaces, ample light, windows, ease of living and comfort. Keep the colors cool but not cold, subdued but not boring.

Then come furnishings and if space allows keep them bold, comfortable and stylish. It amazes me that people spend so much on renovating only to leave little or nothing for furnishings.

Above all show your personality. What distinguishes a home from a house is the individuality and the personal touch instilled by its occupants.

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