

WHAT YOU NEED to create your own wicking pot

1. A drill with a 25mm drill bit
2. A bucket or large container (1/2 wine barrels, food grade containers, olive buckets etc..)
3. Plastic pots to act as reservoirs/void. An assortment of sizes is fine but place a 175mm one in the middle.
3. Shadecloth or fine fabric to drape over the pots and act as the wicking material.
4. Coconut peat - comes in 'brick' form to which you add water.
5. Soil medium - refer to purple Hints section below right.
6. Vermiculite OR preferably, Biochar (a decent handful or shovelful, depending on the container size) or crushed charcoal from a fireplace or woodfired pizza outlets. Mix this through the soil medium.
7. Coco peat mulch - the chunky stuff, also sold in brick form. An excellent mulch for pots.
8. Organic slow release fertiliser - we recommend Shades of Green Garden Fertiliser or Searles Organic Fruit and Flower Fertiliser.
9. Organic liquid fertiliser - during the growing season, vegies like regular 2 weekly feeds of liquid food. Worm or compost juice is perfect, or you can buy one like Gropotion or Eco vital.

Note, seaweed liquid by itself is a tonic not a food.



assorted plastic pots ready for their shadecloth blanket (see below right)



Draped shadecloth covers the plastic pots and ensures that no soil medium infiltrates the reservoirs and creates smelly anaerobic conditions. This 1/2 wine barrel is ready to be filled with soil and planted up.



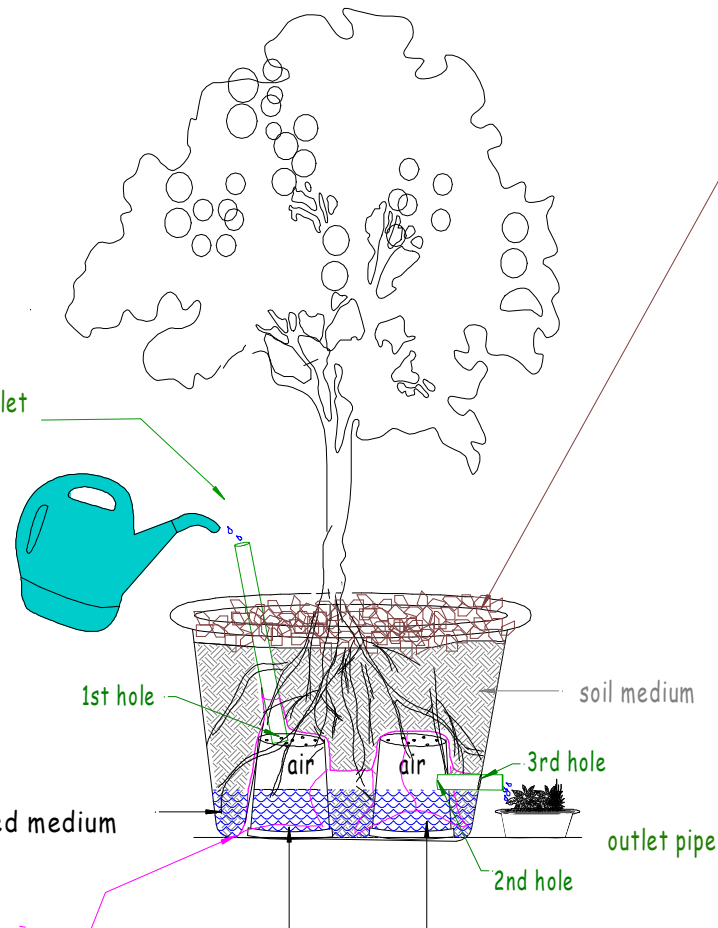
START HERE

- 1 Drill a 25mm hole in the top of the plastic pot nearest the inlet hole. Then drill a hole in the plastic pot opposite which is nearest the outlet. Drill another 25mm hole in the side of your container about 1/2 to 2/3 the way up. Insert a length of 25mm polypipe through the first 'inlet' pot. Then do the same for the outlet pot - see pic.
- 2

food grade plastic buckets turned into wicking pots

25mm pvc pipe inlet

water saturated medium



140mm - 200mm/5L pots upside down. Use one 5L pot in a small container and up to 7 assorted sizes in a half wine barrel. The more volume the container, the more pots (or air/water reservoirs) you will need.

3

Plant your plant and back fill with your soil. Compact down a little to create the capillary pathways for the wicking action. Your soil medium can be either: 50% vegie mix + 50% cocopeat mixed together + biochar and slow release organic fertiliser OR, if you don't want to buy bulk or can't access vegie mix, try: 25% Premium potting mix + 25% soil conditioner or screened compost + 50% coco peat, mixed together with biochar and fertiliser.

4

mulch (recycled prunings or coco peat mulch). The mulch prevents evaporation and increases the health of plants by up to 50%.

5

When you have planted your plant or plants in the wicking pot, water deeply from the top, covering the surface until water comes out of the outlet pipe. This means the entire soil medium is wet and the business of wicking can begin. After this, water only through the inlet pipe.

SOME HINTS and idle thoughts...

- a. The larger the container, the more plastic pots you will need for aeration. 5-7 plastic 140mm pots is a good number for a 70cm diameter container like a 1/2 wine barrel or similar sized pot. 1/2 wine or bourbon barrels are perfect, though the latter are better as they contain less tannins and toxins.
- b. If you would like to use a lovely glazed or other pretty pot which already has holes in it, block them up with silicon. To drill the hole on the side of a glazed pot, you will need a special tile drill bit and some water to cool things down as you drill.
- c. Did you know.... that charcoal both keeps the mix sweet and also helps with the wicking action.
- d. The 25mm pvc pipe outlet is 1/4 to 1/3 from the bottom. It's best that the outlet pipe is opposite the inlet pipe. Optional - place a water loving plant like mint or gota kola below to catch the drips.
- e. The higher the outlet pipe level, the more moisture loving your plant need to be as the volume of water will greater. Only water when you need to. You will get more experienced as you observe the plant. Avoid over watering - this system works best when the plants dry out a bit between waterings. This can be anywhere between 1-4 weeks in summer, more in winter.
- f. Why not put your large heavy wine barrel or large pot on castors for easy moving? This will also help prevent your wine barrels from being eaten by termites, by lifting it off the ground. In Perth, the Blythe Castors in Osborne Park is the place to go. Buy quality and they will last for many years.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT....This article has been written after many frustrating hours, emptying anaerobic, smelly and soggy half dead plants from self watering pots. Despite copious use of gravel and perlite, my attempts at wicking were a dismal failure until I was fortunate to attend a wonderful workshop by the aptly named Harry Wykham, local permaculture guru, designer and inspiring, inventive soul. Thanks Harry, for generously sharing your considerable knowledge at the Less is More Festival in Cottesloe, February 2014.

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