



## Why graft Australian plants?

Many of Australia's most spectacular plants come from Western Australia and the drier areas of Australia. Some of these plants have been found to be adaptable to east coast conditions while many others can't seem to adapt without help.

With the less adaptable plants, there are many that can be grown if they can be grafted onto related plants that live on the eastern seaboard. But there are other plants that don't seem to be able to survive or thrive no matter what you do.

There are four major reasons why we graft many of Australia's most beautiful plants:

- 1 In their natural environment Western Australia's plants have no resistance to common east coast soil pathogens such as Phytophthora. Grafting them onto related SE Australian plants (rootstocks) that have a natural inbuilt resistance to local soil pathogens can fix this.
- 2 Many of Western Australia's plants normally only grow in very specific soil type, nutrient, mineral and drainage conditions that are impossible to replicate away from their natural habitat. However the rootstocks we use will grow well in a remarkably wide range of soil types and conditions, obviating the need for any special soil preparation.
- 3 To guarantee that a plants particular form or colour is replicated it has to grown from a cutting or grafted. If they won't grow well on their own roots here, then we have to graft. We carefully select the best examples of these plants from the wild, so only the very best forms are propagated and sold to gardeners. With grafted plants you know what you are getting and that they will be true to label.
- 4 With grafted plants you don't have to wait five years or more to see what you have got, as is common with seed grown trees. All of our grafted plants with the exception of the Hakeas (which flower on second year wood) flower about one year after they have been grafted. This is because the tree has been 'tricked' into thinking it is mature because the scion that was grafted onto a seedling was mature wood.

Many of these plants we graft will grow in SE Australia ungrafted, but will probably die in a short time as they succumb to the local soil pathogens or other problems.

In areas with heavy clay soils, ungrafted plants usually die from root rot because of poor drainage. This is typical in most of Western Sydney and parts of the Canberra region. Many good Australian plants that are generally not grafted will need raised beds to give better drainage.

The end result is that grafted plants are a better investment because they can live much longer, be healthier and give better displays than their non-grafted equivalent in the SE



Australian environment. Some West Australian Boronias are an excellent examples of this – the Brown Boronia seems to last about two to six months in Sydney gardens whereas the grafted version lasts for many years. One growing in Tarrowood’s gardens is now 10 years old!

Grafting is not a universal panacea for touchy plants – it will not fix humidity and other atmospheric conditions that are problems for some arid land Australian plants. Some just will not grow on properly or in fact survive in the wetter parts of eastern Australia.

At Tarrowood Nursery we have been selecting the very best Australian plants for SE Australian gardens over the last 10 years. We have used grafting where necessary to give longevity and value for money to customers, for plants assessed with special requirements.