

Bay Tree

Laurus nobilis · Laurel family

DIFFICULTY Easy

TYPE Evergreen perennial tree/large shrub
MATURITY Usable from year one, slow-growing



SUN
Full-part sun



WATER
Moderate



SOIL PH
6.0–7.5



SPACING
3–5m if
unpruned, or
pot/hedge



DEPTH
as per pot

01 Prunes well into a hedge or pot specimen

Left alone, bay grows into a substantial tree, but it responds very well to clipping — many homesteads keep it as a large pot specimen or a trimmed hedge instead.



bushy perennial clump



or strike a cutting in a pot

02 Planting

METHOD	Plant from a nursery pot; slow-growing, so a larger starting size saves years.
SOIL	Well-drained, moderately fertile.
TIMING	Plant in spring or autumn.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

03 Growing care

- Water regularly while young, then moderately once established.
- Prune or clip to control size and shape as desired.
- Feed lightly in spring.
- Protect from hard frost while young.

04 Problems

- **Scale insects** — small bumps on stems and leaves; treat with horticultural oil.
- **Sooty mould** — follows scale/sap-suckers; treat the pest.
- **Slow growth** — normal for this species; be patient.
- **Leaf spot** — humid conditions; improve airflow.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Usable year-round once established.
METHOD	Pick individual leaves as needed.
CURING	Dry leaves flat for a couple of weeks — dried bay is actually preferred in cooking.
STORAGE	Dried, airtight, a year or more.
PRESERVING	See Dehydrating (drying woody herbs for storage) for ways to keep a harvest surplus.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY

Most plants — a good non-competitive neighbour

AVOID NEARBY

None major

ROTATION NOTE

Not applicable — long-lived tree/shrub.