**FACT SHEET:**

**Raising Lomandra**

Landcarers love Lomandra

*Lomandra* or the Mat Rushes are a group of hardy native grass-like plants that are very useful for the urban gardener, farmer or landcarer alike. They thrive in dense, mass plantings and can grow in full sun or full shade. Their matting roots stabilize soil and trap nutrients, making them excellent for buffering and riparian plantings. *Lomandra* are easy to grow from seed and are a great plant to propagate and raise at home.

**Do you need to stabilize a creek bank?**

*Protect the edge of a remnant?*

*Create a buffer along a road edge?*

**You’ll love Lomandra**

Growing Lomandra

There are many ways to grow *Lomandra*, the most cost-efficient of which is to propagate from seed. See the table overleaf for a step-by step guide for growing *Lomandra* from seed.

If you already have established *Lomandra* plants on your property, another quick way to propagate them is to dig up and split clumps, known as root ball division. Use a sharp blade to divide the clumps, making sure each small clump you plant has a good root system. Trim back the leaves to about 1/3 of their original length before planting to help establishment.

Alternatively, the collected seeds can be scattered widely on gravel and other disturbed sites where competition by grass is unlikely.

**Using Lomandra**

Although naturally found growing at the base of river banks, *Lomandra hystrix* can be planted throughout the bank profile. They survive well when submerged during flooding and bend over with water flow to protect the soil. *L. longifolia* can be planted on the outer edge of a riparian zone to trap nutrients and sediment before they enter the waterway. When established, *L. longifolia* densely planted on the edge of a planting will slow weed intrusion and provide shelter for young trees.

Which Lomandra should I plant?

There are several *Lomandra* species that are native to the Far North Coast of NSW. It is important that you consider which species is best for your location.

- **Lomandra hystrix River Mat Rush**
  Riparian species that is very successful in stabilising wet areas and the banks of waterways.

- **L. longifolia Long-leaved Mat Rush**
  Hardy species that does well in a range of environments, including full sun

- **L. spicata** Rainforest species that prefers full shade, moist locations. Remove orange flesh from seed before propagation.
A Step-By-Step Guide for growing Lomandra from seed

1. While the Lomandra are fruiting from December to February, identify the female plants (more robust seed heads with hundreds of tightly held “ball” like fruits). Before the plant releases its seeds, test the ripeness of the seed “balls” with your fingernail: if they are firm to hard they are ready to harvest.

2. Cut the flowering stalks and place them in a paper bag in a warm place. The fruit will open and release the seed. There is no need to separate the seed from the other papery fruit parts.

3. Scatter the seed mix evenly over firmly packed potting mix in a standard seed tray. Kept moist, the seeds should germinate in 4-6 weeks. Protect the trays from mice, which love Lomandra seed. When between 50 and 75mm high the seedlings can be potted on into 50mm tubes (recycling centers are often a good, cheap source for these).

4. Keep well watered and partly shaded for one month. When plants are 100-150mm high, harden them off in full sunlight until ready to plant. Lomandra will grow to planting size within a season and are robust enough to be planted out when they are around 200-300mm high.

5. Select your planting site and prepare the ground for planting. Kill weeds and remove grass to reduce competition with your plants. Dig holes deep enough for the joint of the shoot and root to be at ground level. To ensure dense coverage, plant at 0.5-1m spacing in an offset, zigzag pattern with rows 1m apart. The clumps will quickly expand and form dense mats.

6. Plant by loosening the Lomandra in the pot by squeezing on the diagonals. Back-fill the hole and use your hands to firm down the soil. Water in well and use a thick layer of mulch. Make sure you mark where the Lomandra have been planted with a stake, as they are easily “lost” in summer’s grass growth.

7. Proper maintenance is essential for the success of your planting, particularly in the first few seasons while plants establish. Control competition from grass and other weeds hand weeding, brush cutting or by carefully spraying herbicide around the young plants.

8. Images: Female Lomandra seed head, Separated seeds ready to sow, young plants in tubes almost ready for planting, Young Lomandra plants. Images courtesy of Bellinger Landcare.

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