

# Growing

## *Lomandra* from seed

A step by step guide for landholders



THE MAT RUSH *LOMANDRA HYSTRIX* IS AN IMPORTANT RIVER BANK STABILISER



A female seed head of *Lomandra hystrix* showing the ball like seed containing fruit



*Lomandra hystrix* or river mat rush is important riparian species that stabilises the banks of waterways. Landholders often need them in large numbers for dense riparian plantings. They are easy to grow from seed and it is worthwhile having a go at growing your own. This leaflet explains how.

The species has separate male and female plants which are most easily identified when they are fruiting from December to February. The female plants seed heads are much more robust with hundreds of tightly held "ball" like fruits. In nature the seeds are shot out explosively, so the seed heads need to be collected before seed release has begun. However, the seeds need to be ripe and the easiest way to do this is to test the seed "balls" with your fingernail: if they are firm to hard they are ready to harvest.

Cut the flowering stalks and put 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. The mix should be scattered 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 centres are often a good, cheap source for these).

Keep well watered and partly shaded for a month or so after potting on and harden off in full sunlight when they are between 100 and 150mm high.

*Lomandras* will grow to planting size within a season and are robust enough to be planted out when they are around 200-300mm high. Make sure you mark where they have been planted with a stake as they are easily "lost" in summer's grass growth.

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

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

## Using *Lomandra*

Although naturally found growing at the toe of river banks during normal flows *Lomandra* can be planted throughout the bank profile. They survive well when submerged during flooding and bend over with water flow to protect the soil beneath.

Bare paddock sites are usually prepared by spot spraying with glyphosate where the *Lomandra* plants are to be planted. If not using herbicide, it is important to remove the grass sward which will compete with *Lomandra*.

To ensure dense coverage of *Lomandra*, especially in actively eroding areas, plant at 0.5-1m centres in an offset, zig-zag pattern with rows 1m apart. The clumps will quickly expand and form dense mats. It is important to mark the *Lomandras* with a stake as they are easily "lost" in summers grass growth.

Plant by loosening the *Lomandra* in the pot by squeezing on the diagonals and place in a hole which should be deep enough for the joint of the shoot and root to be at ground level. Water in and use mulch or place/pin weed mat around each plant if practicable.

It is important to control competition from grass and other weeds particularly in the first few seasons while the plants establish. Herbicide control around the young plants is effective. It can help protect *Lomandra* as you spray by placing a bucket over it.

Hand weeding or brush cutting are alternative maintenance techniques.



Separated seeds ready to sow



Seeds spread on potting mix in seedling tray



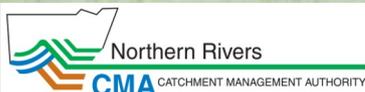
Seedling from tray ready for transplanting to pot



Young plants in tubes almost ready for planting

When using chemicals, always follow instructions on the label and wear correct protective clothing.

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