**Silver Lady Ferns – into the ground**

Using a controlled-release fertilizer like **Scotts Osmocote** protects their sensitive roots from chemical burns while providing sustained nutrition. Because ferns are light, phosphorus-sensitive feeders, use **Osmocote Native** or **Osmocote Plus Organics All Purpose**.

Follow this step-by-step guide to give your Silver Lady Fern the best start:

**1. Select the Location**

- **Shade:** Pick a spot with full shade or dappled, indirect sunlight. Strong Perth sun will quickly scorch and bleach the fronds.
- **Shelter:** Protect the fern from harsh, drying winds.

**2. Prepare the Soil & Dig the Hole**

- **Dig:** Dig a hole **twice as wide** as the fern's current pot and to the exact same depth.
- **Improve the soil:** Ferns will fail in straight Perth sand. Mix the soil you removed from the hole (the backfill) with a generous amount of rich organic compost, well-rotted manure, or peat moss to boost moisture retention.

**3. Mix in the Osmocote**

- **Measure:** Follow the pack instructions for a new planting (usually **1 to 2 tablespoons** or half a scoop depending on the size of your fern).
- **Incorporate:** Thoroughly blend the dry Osmocote granules directly into your amended backfill soil mix.
- *Crucial Tip:* Do not dump the Osmocote loosely into the bottom of the open hole, as concentrated pockets can stress the roots. It must be mixed evenly throughout the backfill.

**4. Plant the Fern**

- **Unpot gently:** Slide the Silver Lady Fern out of its nursery pot. These ferns deeply resent root disturbance, so **do not tease, pull, or rough up the root ball**. Leave it completely intact.
- **Check the level:** Place the root ball into the hole. Ensure the crown (where the fronds meet the roots) sits **just above or level with the ground line**. Burying the crown causes rot.
- **Backfill:** Gently fill the mixed Osmocote-soil blend around the roots, pressing down lightly to remove large air pockets.

**5. Water, Mulch, and Maintain**

- **Water thoroughly:** Give the plant a heavy soak immediately to settle the soil and activate the Osmocote.
- **Mulch:** Apply a 5–10cm layer of organic mulch (like composted bark) around the base to lock in moisture against Perth's heat. Keep the mulch a few centimetres away from the central trunk to prevent rot.
- **Establishment care:** Water the fern every day for the first few weeks, then transition to deep watering 2–3 times a week depending on the season. Never let the soil fully dry out.