

Creating a native garden

What?

A native garden is one that is made up entirely of Australian plants and wildflowers

Why?

There are many benefits that come with establishing a Native Garden, these include:

- Decrease in water use
- Reduction in use of fertiliser
- Increased habitat for local birds and wildlife
- Improved local biodiversity
- Reduction in backyard weeds
- They look great!

How?

Start your native garden in a small area of your property and gradually increase its size as time and money become available

- Consider the microclimate of your property:
The southern side of your house will generally be cooler and moister. The northern and western sides of your house are usually hotter and more exposed to the elements
- Check your soil. Good soil quality is the foundation of a healthy native garden. There are three soil types sandy, clay and loam. Clay is the most common soil type in this area
- Make a plan. It is easier to work with the environmental features of your garden rather than against them. Therefore when making your plan consider things such as the microclimate, the slope of the site, where water runoff flows to, views, paths, soil type, existing trees and plants, space for garden shed and compost, entertaining areas, raised beds to improve drainage (natives like well drained soil) and of course your budget
- Train your plants to be waterwise. Do this by thoroughly watering your garden at well spaced intervals
- Other things to consider include the area of lawn, as this is the largest water user in the garden

Where to go?

To purchase native plants visit your local nursery. Wollondilly Council, Liverpool Council and Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living all have community nurseries that stock local native plant species. Hardware suppliers often sell natives or for further information contact your local council

How much will it cost?

The cost of creating a native garden is largely dependent on the size of your property and how much of your garden you dedicate to growing natives

There will be costs associated with the purchase of plants and there will also be expenses for compost (unless you make your own), mulch, irrigation and garden edging materials

Troubleshooting

My native garden isn't growing as well as I would like it to. Why?

- You may need to check your soil type and condition through a soil test
- The plants you are using may not be suitable for your area or may be planted in the wrong area of your garden
- Analyse the frequency you are watering your plants. Many natives only require a small amount of water and become stressed if they are over watered

My natives are not flowering...help!

- Seasonal variation may affect this, along with the location of your plants if they are in a shaded area. Pruning at the incorrect time and water stress can also be a factor

How long will it take for my native garden to grow?

A native garden can be created in various stages

Grasses, ground covers and shrubs can take a couple of years to develop, trees may take even longer

Maintenance

Planting guide

1. Identify the appropriate location in your garden as per the recommendations on the plant label
2. Thoroughly soak the plant while it is still in the pot
3. If planting into hard ground, loosen the soil for approx. 1 square metre
4. Once soil is loosened or if planting into an established garden bed, dig a hole the same depth as the pot you are planting from and a little wider. Fill the hole with water and allow draining
5. Remove plant from the pot, check roots and straighten any curled ones
6. Place plant in hole, roots pointing down
7. Fill the hole and firm down with your hands
8. Water in your plant

Watering

1. Water your plant thoroughly at well spaced intervals
2. Water your plant around their drip line. This is the area under the plant canopy
3. Always water in cooler parts of the day, early morning is best
4. Once the plant is established it will need less water to survive

Fertilising

The great thing about native plants is they don't need to be fertilised very often

Initially it can be beneficial to fertilise newly planted natives. If doing so, make sure you use native specific fertiliser which has no phosphorous. Such fertiliser is available at nurseries, hardware stores and supermarkets

Long term natives that are well established don't require fertilising

Tips for propagating native plants from cuttings

Here are some helpful tips for propagating native plants from cuttings:

- Always take cuttings from new growth of healthy plants
- The best time to take cuttings is between February and April, as it is cooler than the summer months
- Cut a piece of plant 5-8cm long below a node (the place on the plant where the leaf grows from)
- Remove 1/3 to 1/2 of the leaves. Do not damage stem
- Dip cutting into hormone powder/gel
- Place cutting in a hole up to half of its length
- Thoroughly water and place in a warm moist area

Want to know more?

For further information on buying, growing, and maintaining Native plants and to attend a workshop run by your local council contact:

Camden	4654 7777
Campbelltown	4645 4000
Liverpool	1300 36 2170
Wollondilly	4677 1100
Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living	4647 9828

Acknowledgements to:

- Spence I (2004) Garden Plants and Flowers in Australia Dorling Kindersley Pty Ltd
- Greig D (1994) Australian Climbers and Ground Covers Simon & Schuster Australia

