

# Be patient - the bush will thank you !

Weedy bushland that is helped to regenerate naturally has a chance of becoming a relatively balanced ecosystem needing minimal maintenance to remain healthy. Planted areas require more continuing attention (like a garden) and do not have the same potential to recover naturally from future disturbances such as fire.

Inappropriate clearing and planting can irreversibly damage the nature of a bushland site and undermine its natural recovery potential. It is better to wait until resources are available to treat the site properly with ongoing follow up than to jump in, clear and plant and thus destroy its potential to ever regenerate naturally (and in NSW, any work in endangered bush must first be approved by the Department of Environment and Conservation).

## Protect what is special about your bush

Bushland in or near urban areas is often disturbed and degraded but it still has many values. Even small patches of remnant bushland are of scientific and educational importance. They provide information about the original natural environment of that area, including its species, their distribution and relationships. Natural ecological interactions between soils, slope, aspect, exposure, rainfall, plants and animals, can be studied in local bushland.

In our enthusiasm to see native plants returning to replace weeds, we need to be careful not to cause any unintentional damage. Planting will usually distort the unique character of a bushland remnant, whereas assisted natural regeneration will conserve its intrinsic values.

## A well planned project...

Restoration should be seen as a long term project so that native plants have time to regenerate naturally where weeds have been removed.

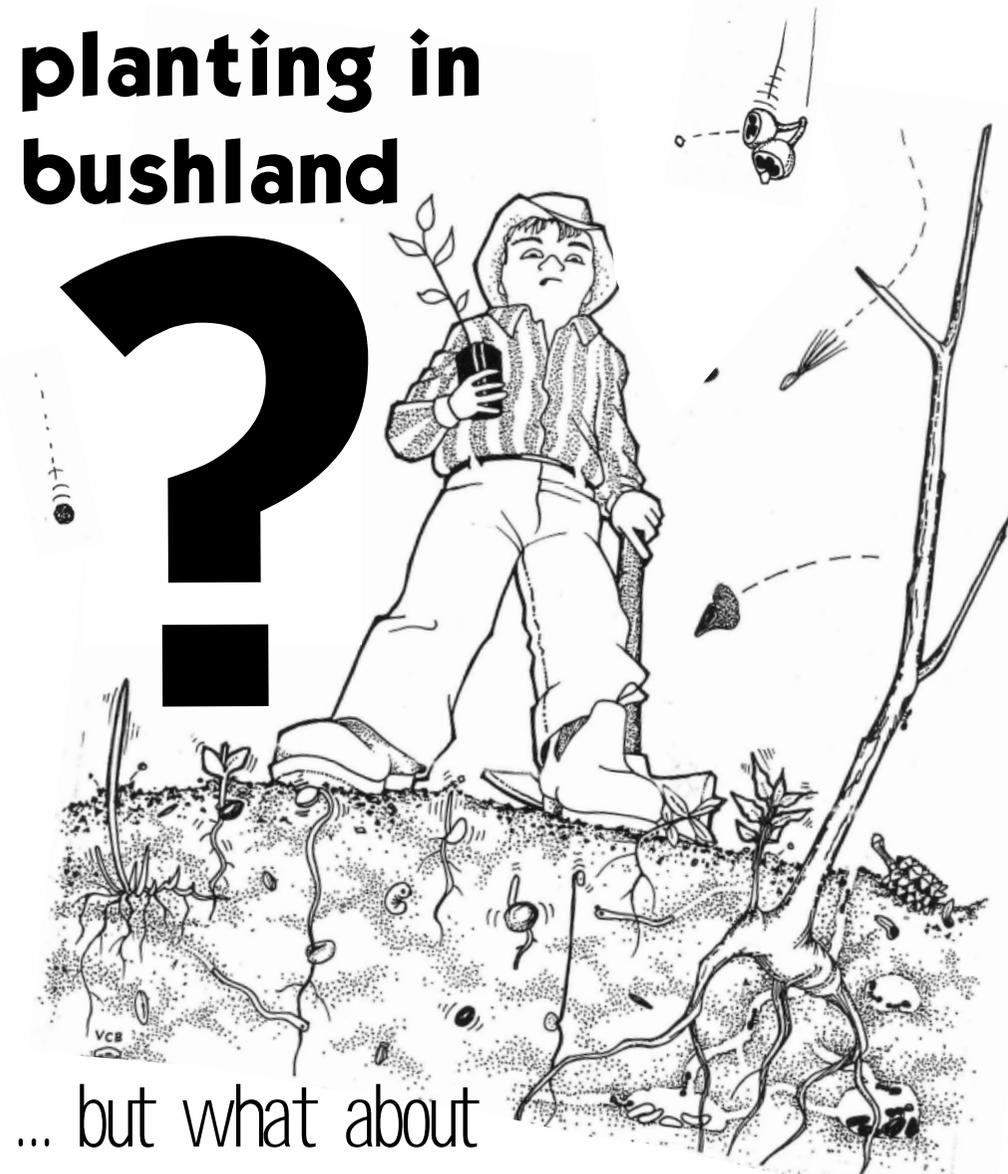
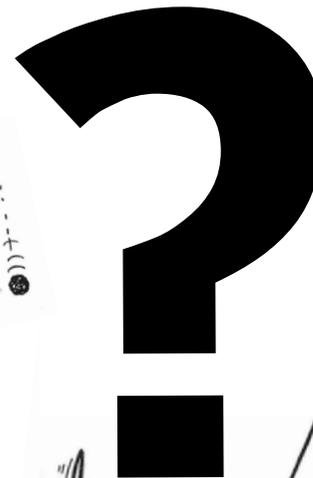
As well as removing weeds it will often be necessary to address the cause of the problem before natural regeneration can take effect. E.g stormwater runoff may need to be managed and some areas may need to be fenced to exclude stock or restrict overuse.



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# planting in bushland



... but what about

# natural regeneration

it's the key to restoring and managing our bush

# The 3 Rs of restoration

**Retain** remnant indigenous vegetation

**Regenerate** where there is any potential for natural regeneration

**Replant** only where there is no regeneration potential

## 1 Retain First

Conserving existing natural areas should always be our first priority. In many regions, both urban and rural, there is little bushland remaining. Our native ecosystems are more complex than we yet understand and we are not able to recreate bushland once it has been destroyed.

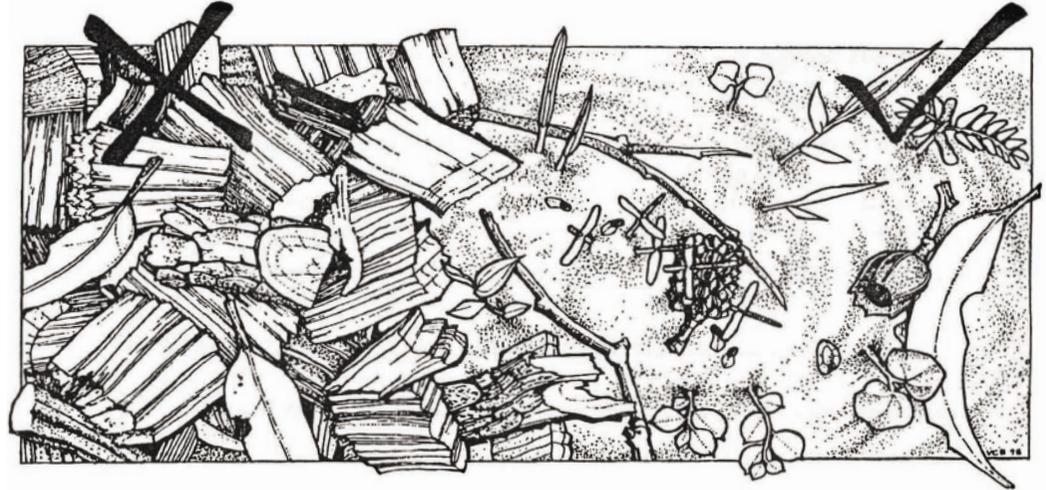
## 2 Then Regenerate

Where bushland remains but is degraded by things like weed invasion or grazing, regeneration should be the primary goal. Damaged bushland is still valuable and is capable of regenerating if given the right assistance. Native plant seed will still be stored in the soil, or will be able to reach the site from nearby bushland (often with the assistance of birds, other animals or the wind). Even cleared or mown areas can sometimes regenerate if the original soil profile is intact.

**Remember not to clear too much too quickly.** As well as native regeneration, lots of weeds usually appear after clearing, and follow up weeding will be needed to maintain the site. It's very important to protect any regenerating bush plants from being swamped by weeds!

**Wait and see what happens.** Natural regeneration can take time. So after clearing the weeds, give the natives time to come up - two years is often recommended. If you are not sure about your ability to identify young regenerating native plants, enlist the help of someone with more experience.

**Natural regeneration can often be encouraged** by removing excess ground litter and disturbing the topsoil. Allow light and warmth to reach ground level. Mulching should be avoided where there is any chance of regeneration - it will suppress the weeds but it has the same effect on regenerating natives.



**Consider using fire.** Heat and smoke may be required to stimulate germination of some species. Seek advice on the relevance of fire on your site. If burning is appropriate, plan carefully, considering fire history and recommended fire regime. Fire is a more natural method of intervention than planting because it makes use of one of the bush's inbuilt regeneration triggers.

## 3 Replant Last

Planting is sometimes seen as a quick and easy solution to the challenge of restoring bush but it is not necessary where natural regeneration potential exists. Indeed, planting in such sites can work against the aims of restoration by interfering with regeneration.

There are some sites which are so highly degraded or altered that natural regeneration is unlikely. In this case planting can be useful but the plants should be grown from seeds or cuttings collected on or near the site to be planted.

Planting should only be considered after the site's natural ability to recover has been assessed as very poor - often where long-term disturbance has occurred. Examples of sites which might require planting are areas of fill, and sites which are affected by stormwater inflow.

Where planting is carried out, good records and maps must be kept (ideally somewhere central like a local library or Council) so that these areas can be identified in the future.