Plant native species

The survival of native wildlife in our city depends on healthy native vegetation communities. Create a native garden today - it's fun, easy and good for the environment.

When planning your garden, it is important to choose the correct plant species for your area. Sourcing locally grown plants that are suited to the vegetation and soil type of your property will ensure a healthier, stronger plant along with many other advantages:

- once established, only minimal garden maintenance is required
- native gardens require less water
- they attract native birds, butterflies and frogs to your garden
- native gardens provide a food source and habitat for local fauna
- a variety of garden styles can still be created such as formal, informal and native edible gardens
- insecticides and fungicides are not needed as native plants are adapted to the local conditions
- land containing native gardens or bushland is aesthetically attractive which can increase its real estate value
- native gardens can assist in connecting existing bushland pockets, creating a wildlife corridor.

Native gardening for your backyard

Before you plant it is recommended you get to know the plant species already naturally present on your property. This will give the best indication of what is suitable and it may even be possible to revegetate cleared areas by encouraging the spread, by seed or vegetative means, of existing vegetation without the expense of purchasing plants.

The plants listed in the City of Gold Coast (City) Plant selection guide are indicative of the range of native species generally available from native plant nurseries and provide a starting point when planning your garden. However, your choice of plants should not be limited to those in the list. Extend the list of plants suitable for your site by consulting with nurseries and using references such as the Plant selection guide.

Plant a range of different types of local native plants such as vines, ground covers, shrubs and trees which provide the food, shelter and other resources native animals need. Non-native plant species may not provide suitable resources and some may even harm native wildlife.

Wildlife friendly gardens

Massed plantings of just one or two species are generally not wildlife friendly as these gardens lack the diversity of food and other resources needed by native wildlife. For example, some birds are nectar feeders, while others feed on fruit or insects that live in the foliage.

Densely planted shrubs, especially with prickly foliage, can provide protection for small birds and other animals. The crevices of rough barked trees provide foraging areas, protection and shelter for small lizards and insects.

How to create a frog pond

[Image of a frog and pond]
Frogs are a valuable part of our environment. Frogs and tadpoles are an important link in the food chain of many ecosystems and do a great job in helping control insect pest populations.

It is important you read further information about mosquitoes before making your frog pond.

Building your frog pond

- First choose a partly shady, part sunny area, but not directly under trees as some tree leaves can be poisonous to amphibians.
- An artificial frog pond can be created using styrofoam boxes, children’s play pools, old laundry tubs and plastic containers like bins, or by manually digging a hole with gentle slopes and about 50 centimetres deep in at least one spot.
- Use a sheet of thick, black plastic to line the pond to prevent water from escaping. This type of plastic can be purchased from many pond product suppliers or a hardware store.
- Plant shrubs and groundcovers around the pond to give frogs a hiding spot from predators and shelter from the wind. Vegetation will also attract insects to your garden for frogs to eat. Use native plant species such as creek mat rush (Lomandra hystrix), common rush (Juncus usitatus), tussock sedge (Carex appressa) and common reed (Phragmites australis) planted close together to help keep cane toads out.
- Fill the pond with tap water (not from a metal tank) and let it stand for at least a week before introducing frogs or fish.
- Don’t use pesticides. Avoid invasive water plants like water hyacinth.

How to create a garden attractive to birds

Birds help cross-pollinate flowers, spread native fruits and seeds across the landscape, control insects and play a major part in the food chain. Birds are attracted to flowers, fruits, seeds, insects and other animals such as snails and lizards.

To attract birds to your garden, use brightly flowering plant species suitable to your area that fruit and seed, attract insects and create good roosting and hiding spots.

Useful tips

- Select a wide range of plants that flower and fruit at different times of the year to have a constant flush of birdlife.
- Provide a water source for birds as this encourages them to have a drink or a dip.
- Provide nest boxes as this will encourage the birds to return or even take up residency in your garden. Note that regular maintenance of a nest box may be required to ensure mynas and feral bees do not take up residency.

Larger habitats

For larger habitat restoration projects, plant species lists can be obtained from the City and expert advice on species selection for acreage properties can be obtained through the Conservation Partnerships Program.

So be adventurous and do some research before buying your plants. If we limit our choice of species to the same small list everyone else is using we reduce diversity and limit the number of native animals likely to adopt our gardens as their home.

Environmental weeds

Environmental weeds are introduced plants that have naturalised and invaded our bushland, beaches and waterways, threatening our natural environment.

What is an environmental weed and how can you help?

Composting green waste

Creating a more sustainable garden and doing your bit for the environment is easy for the keen home gardener. Recycling food scraps and green waste can provide nutrient rich compost for your garden and keep valuable resources out of landfill. Find out more about green waste recycling.

You can compost:

- kitchen organics such as fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, egg shells, tea leaves and tea bags, wilted flowers and pot plants
- garden organics such as grass cuttings, green leaves, non-toxic weeds without seeds, fruits or tubers
- animal manure - horse, chicken, cow.

Related information

- Conservation Partnerships
- Gold Coast Flora & Fauna

Jump to key information

Key information