



# *Backyard Biodiversity*

A guide to creating wildlife-friendly and sustainable gardens in Boroondara



# Backyard Biodiversity

“ ‘We must feel part of the land we walk on and love the plants that grow there ... if we are to achieve a spirit in the garden.’ Gordon Ford (1999), *The natural Australian garden*.  
Bloominings Books

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‘The City of Boroondara recognises its responsibility as a custodian of the environment, as well as respectfully acknowledging the Wurundjeri people as the first owners of this country, and the custodians of the cultural heritage of the lands.’ *Biodiversity Strategy, City of Boroondara*



Cover images  
Feature image: One of many inspiring Boroondara gardens featured in this booklet. Bottom left to right: Silvereye, Yellow-banded Dart, Gang-gang Cockatoo and Native Fuchsia (*Correa reflexa*).

## We *love* our gardens and trees

Residents of Boroondara are justifiably proud of our green leafy suburbs and wonderful parks and gardens. The name Boroondara signifies shady place in the local indigenous dialect. We are fortunate our municipality has hundreds of mature canopy trees to cool our streets on hot summer days.

## We can love our native flora and fauna too

Our vision for Boroondara is a place known not only for its leafy streets and open spaces but also for its many *sustainable* and *productive* private gardens. This includes gardens rich in *wildlife* and *local flora*.



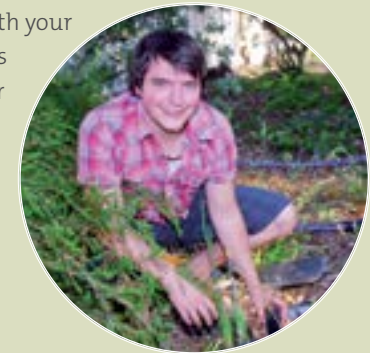
To attract more wildlife **a little can mean a lot**. It takes only a few bushes, some local grasses and a tree in the corner to start the magic.



## You can become a wildlife gardener

Many Boroondara gardeners have already started to create magical garden environments full of beautiful butterflies, energetic honeyeaters, majestic eucalypts and indigenous wildflowers like bluebells and everlasting daisies.

With a little planning and the right plant choice, you too can start. Your new wildlife haven can require less maintenance and water compared to an exotic garden. You can start small or tackle a larger project; plan a full garden makeover or work with your neighbours to link your wildlife projects.





Our beloved pets (cats and dogs) can harass and injure native animals.



## Creating a wildlife-friendly garden supports *biodiversity*

Biodiversity is the range of all forms of life on earth — the micro-organisms, plant and animal species, the genes they contain and the communities they belong to.

### Our rich biodiversity is under increasing threat

The natural biodiversity of Boroondara — which once included expansive woodlands, grasslands and herb fields, and wetlands along our rivers and streams — has been affected badly by urbanisation. Over the past 150 years, most of the country has been cleared, natural wetlands drained and our waterways stressed by pollution and erratic inflows. Climate change now poses new and compounding threats with ongoing lower rainfall and a predicted increase in heatwaves and hot days. Our local area, along with the rest of Australia and the world, is facing a biodiversity crisis.

## Local biodiversity in crisis

- Plants and animals living in isolated pockets of land face a high risk of becoming locally extinct.
- Some common garden plants, like Agapanthus, are recognised weeds. The seeds invade reserves and bushland where they thrive, and smother delicate local flora.
- Garden chemicals (fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides) can harm native animals and our waterways.
- Foxes and other feral animals prey on birds, reptiles and small mammals.

# Why biodiversity matters

Often overlooked, but essential to survival of life on Earth, is the understanding that plants, animals and micro-organisms provide us with 'ecosystem services'. Examples of these life-sustaining services include: producing oxygen for us to breathe, storing (or sequestering) carbon from the atmosphere, cleaning our water, breaking down waste, pollinating crops and flowers, and dispersing seeds. Every species plays a specific and integral role in a balanced natural ecosystem — so protecting every species is important.

## Biodiversity out of balance

Many of our centuries-old River Red Gums suffer from dieback. The cause appears to be dramatic infestations of small insects eating the leaves. These leaf miners would normally be controlled by insect-eating birds such as Spotted Pardalotes (shown right), but there are now so few of them around. These tiny birds have been chased away by aggressive honeyeaters. The imbalance between the insect eaters and the honeyeaters is due to the loss of bird habitat and shrubby understorey in which the smaller birds can hide.



## Indigenous gardens give nature a helping hand

It is more important than ever that we do our bit to protect and create habitats. By using indigenous plants in your garden you can create havens for insects, lizards, butterflies and birds, thus enhancing local biodiversity.

Indigenous plants are not only native to Australia; they are *plants that occur naturally in your local area*.

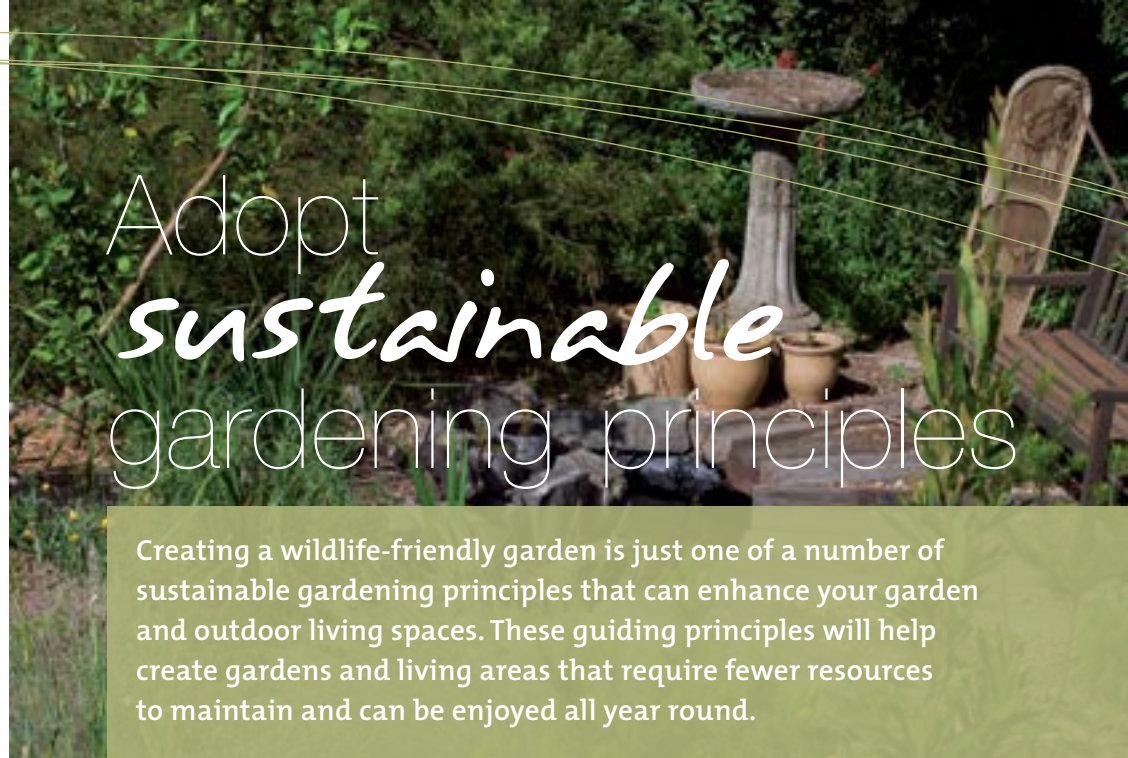
When your garden and neighbourhood is mostly native or indigenous it will attract a greater diversity of native animal species. Providing a range of habitats and protecting these plant and animal species in your garden makes an essential contribution to conserving and enhancing our local biodiversity.



We arrived in Australia from South Africa and one of the ways we chose to adopt our new home was to create an Australian garden and wildlife habitat. Over the last few years, we have gradually transformed our back garden. Before we began we rarely heard birds in the morning but now the garden is alive with native birds, which we really enjoy.

We are now replacing our front yard with Australian plants and this has created enormous interest from people walking past and has had a small domino effect as some of our neighbours are now including native plants in their garden too.

Ros and Bruce,  
Camberwell



## Adopt sustainable gardening principles

Creating a wildlife-friendly garden is just one of a number of sustainable gardening principles that can enhance your garden and outdoor living spaces. These guiding principles will help create gardens and living areas that require fewer resources to maintain and can be enjoyed all year round.

### Checklist for creating a sustainable garden

- ✓ Design to suit local conditions.
- ✓ Set aside part of your backyard for a productive garden. Enjoy fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs year round.
- ✓ Avoid plants that are environmental weeds.
- ✓ Plan for climate change by using water-wise plants where possible, mulching garden beds and using tank water for watering plants when necessary.
- ✓ Avoid pesticides or chemicals that harm beneficial organisms or contaminate soil and water.
- ✓ Recycle food and other household and garden waste using a compost bin or worm farm. Use the rich organic compost and liquid fertiliser to create a healthy life-giving soil.
- ✓ Use sustainable and, ideally, locally sourced or recycled materials but avoid rocks, timber and pebbles collected from the wild.
- ✓ Last but not least, provide habitat for local native fauna.

# Your Council is working to protect and enhance the local environment

As a custodian of Boroondara's natural and built environments, Council is undertaking a range of actions from our Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Corridors Plan to protect and enhance local biodiversity.

## Mapping and recording remaining local species

Council has researched and recorded the natural treasures living around us in an Inventory and Assessment of Indigenous Flora and Fauna in Boroondara. A surprising diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, frogs and butterflies still lives in our precious natural bushland. Amazingly for a built-up area, our records include Rakali (Australian Water-rat), wallabies, echidna and platypus. While we have 343 species of indigenous flowering plants and ferns, some 80% of them are threatened with local extinction.



Above: Researcher Joanne Henry from Practical Ecology sets small traps for skinks and lizards in local bushland.

Below: To restore original ecosystems, our staff harvests seeds and takes cuttings from surviving original plants to retain genetic diversity and protect the variety of plants that belong here.

## Protecting significant remnant bushland

Did you know there are as many as 58 sites of natural significance across Boroondara? Some of our remnant bushland is considered significant on a State level including bushland along the Yarra, the billabongs at Freeway Golf Course, majestic River Red Gums at Beckett Park and grassland at Markham Reserve in Ashburton. These remnant ecosystems need help to remain intact and even thrive.

## Investing in revegetation and restoration

Parks and Garden's Environment Team restores, protects and manages the threats to remnant ecosystems. It also encourages local communities to get involved by supporting Environmental Friends Groups. Important tasks include weeding and then replanting to fill gaps, creating walking tracks to protect sensitive areas, and fencing vulnerable sites.



## Showcasing our fabulous local and native flora

Our Parks and Gardens staff use indigenous and native plants in a number of public gardens and other landscapes to showcase our vibrant and attractive Australian flora. Maranoa Gardens in Balwyn is a dedicated native botanical garden featuring stunning displays.

Where appropriate, Council's street tree program focuses on using drought-tolerant indigenous trees in neighborhoods close to existing waterways and bushland reserves where they suit the landscape and character of the area.

## Encouraging sustainable gardening and habitat planting on private land

This is where you come in!

Schools, homes and businesses line the banks of the Yarra and are positioned close to other significant creeks and habitats. You and your garden can play a really important role in helping to protect local plants and native animals by expanding on and providing links and stepping stones between our biodiversity corridors.



Above left: Native and indigenous plants on display at the Maranoa Gardens Open Day.

Above right: Colourful displays of kangaroo paws and everlasting daisies brighten up traffic islands on local roadways.



Our garden provides a really restful and relaxing environment and the native plants are essential stepping stones for birds to move through our suburbs. I know that in the past people have been resistant to native gardens because they think they look untidy and unattractive, but Australian plants can be used as part of formal, cottage and natural looking garden designs.



Brian and Diana, Hawthorn



# Building on what we have — *biodiversity corridors*

Isolating plants and animals in small pockets dramatically increases their chance of becoming locally extinct. Biodiversity corridors reconnect isolated remnant and revegetated ecosystems. This allows animals, and the seeds they carry, to move through the tree canopy, among bushes or along the ground where there is adequate ground cover.

Boroondara's biodiversity corridors link to remnant ecosystems in adjacent suburbs. The Yarra River and creeks that pass through Boroondara can act as natural corridors for our native plants and animals. While Council is enhancing the habitat along these corridors, private gardens can play a vital role in extending existing corridors and creating new links and stepping stones (or resting places) for birds and other wildlife.

As hundreds of wildlife-friendly gardens spring up across our suburbs, the cumulative benefits for our local plant and animal life will be invaluable.



“

I love the fact that you can use Australian plants to create a really beautiful colourful garden.

Our garden is quite formal and over the years we have gradually replaced the exotic plants and trees with Australian plants. Our aim is to have a cottage-style garden with Australian plants. We've even substituted magnificent standard grevilleas for the usual standard roses or weeping cherry.

Just near our front door, we've created a rainbow garden made up of layers of red, orange, green and blue flowers. It's a truly spectacular sight in spring. We have some wonderful trees that are frequented by lorikeets and honeyeaters, and our dense grevilleas and other native shrubs are visited by Eastern Spinebills and other small birds.

David and Sue, Surrey Hills

”



“

I live near a biodiversity corridor and have lots of birds in my garden. At night, I sometimes hear Boobook owls which live in the trees nearby. I have included a nest box for rosellas in one of my tall eucalypt trees. I've planted indigenous grasses so birds can eat the seed heads and insects love the nectar-rich flowers in my "Scarlet King" Grevillea.

I'm also involved in Tree Project, so each year I nurture around 300 seedlings for farmers and revegetation projects in country Victoria. Just in case you're wondering, I have a large water tank to keep my seedlings growing.

”

Jo, Ashburton





## Creating *habitat* links across the municipality

The map on page 11 shows Boroondara's 15 biodiversity corridors. It also indicates special encouragement areas. If you live near a biodiversity corridor or an encouragement area, Council strongly encourages you to create a habitat garden. Even if your home is not in these areas, creating a wildlife-friendly garden will provide an additional stepping stone and build vital habitat links.

By creating a backyard for biodiversity you can help:

- Create new stepping stones to fill gaps between biodiversity corridors.
- Increase the size of existing biodiversity corridors.
- Reduce the risk of weeds escaping from gardens and invading our creek corridors.
- Supplement small populations of local native plants and protect them from local extinction.

## Boroondara's *Biodiversity Corridors* Plan



# Backyard biodiversity — let's get started



## Recipe for making a *wildlife* garden

When you start gardening for wildlife, a little means a lot. Following this simple recipe will help ensure your garden project is a success.

Recipe ingredients can include:

- ✦ A tall mature eucalypt or wattle.
- ✦ A patch of natural mulch or leaf litter for beetles and worms.
- ✦ A clump of dense shrubs where birds can shelter.
- ✦ Nectar plants for honeyeaters.
- ✦ A birdbath in a high, sheltered location.
- ✦ A frog-friendly pond.
- ✦ A warm sheltered corner plus some rocks in the sun for lizards.
- ✦ Daisies for butterflies.
- ✦ Native grasses and groundcovers as an alternative to lawns.
- ✦ Keeping the garden chemical and insecticide free.
- ✦ Keeping cats in at night to protect nesting birds, reptiles and native mammals.

Adapted from Bird Observation and Conservation Australia (BOCA) *Recipe for a Wildlife Garden*

## *Wildlife* garden method

Select recipe ingredients that suit your lifestyle, budget and physical garden — consider things like size, location, sunshine and slope. You can work in stages over time. For best results, include everything.



Be willing to experiment and seek advice — the rewards will be well worth it.

If you are planning a total garden transformation, we suggest asking a landscape designer to help develop an overall plan for you. Indigenous and native plant nurseries may be able to suggest designers specialising in Australian plants and landscapes.

Greater plant diversity in your garden will attract the widest range of visitors. Do you especially love birds? Perhaps you have a good location for supporting a family of frogs? The following sections provide a guide to plants and other garden elements you can include in your garden to attract specific types of animals.





# Attracting *native* birds to your garden

About 153 different native bird species visit our suburbs. The noisy and colourful Rainbow Lorikeets are very obvious, while other birds such as tiny scrubwrens and thornbills are shy. Did you know that lorikeets started coming back to our suburbs only about 30 years ago when we began replanting native trees in our gardens?

## Inviting more birds to your garden

- All birds need high-energy food because it takes a lot of energy to fly and their body temperature runs higher than ours. **Include a range of Australian trees, shrubs and grasses in your garden to provide a variety of natural bird food such as seeds, pollen, nectar and insects.** More specific ideas and plants for different kinds of birds — honeyeaters, parrots and other garden birds — can be found on the next few pages.
- **Add a cat-proof birdbath.** A shallow dish of water located in an elevated, safe position will provide birds with a permanent drinking and bathing place. A bath on a pedestal helps birds feel secure and able to keep an eye out for predators.
- Provide an escape route. **Include some dense or prickly small and larger shrubs in your garden to provide shelter and safe nesting sites for small birds.** Plants with dense leaves and prickles enable passage for little birds but restrict access to larger birds and predators.
- Some birds, especially parrots and owls, like to nest in snug tree hollows. Hollows form only in older trees but many old trees in the city have been removed. **Providing a nest box in your garden is a good substitute for a hollow but remember that different birds require different nest box shapes, sizes and entry holes.**



# Your garden honeyeaters



New Holland Honeyeater



Eastern Spinebill

These hyperactive birds feed almost constantly. When they are not feeding they are chasing, or being chased by other honeyeaters from their favourite flowers. All honeyeaters have a hairy tongue for collecting and scraping pollen and nectar. Most honeyeaters combine honey, insects and spiders in their diet.

## Inviting more honeyeaters to your garden

Honeyeaters are easy to please — they need flowers with lots of nectar on tap, insects and somewhere to escape if threatened.

- **Indigenous trees** will be home to the most diverse array of insects. Many honeyeaters feed in the tree canopy and will visit the same trees several times a day.
- There are many **indigenous shrubs** that have a good nectar supply. Many gardeners also enjoy the hundreds of cultivated grevilleas with their showy flowers and varied foliage. Some will flower

most of the year providing a constant supply of nectar.

## Honeyeaters local to Boroondara

- **New Holland Honeyeaters** are small, and black and white with a bright yellow patch on their wing.
- **White-plumed Honeyeaters** have a piercing whistle. They are a dull colour except for the tiny white stripes across the neck.
- **Eastern Spinebills** are our tiniest and daintiest honeyeaters. The adults eat only the nectar and pollen from flowers but catch and thrust insects down the throats of their hungry growing chicks.

Wattlebirds and Noisy Miners are commonly sighted honeyeaters but they are also garden bullies. Planting dense and prickly shrubs will encourage the smaller honeyeaters by providing safe places to which they can escape.



White-plumed Honeyeater

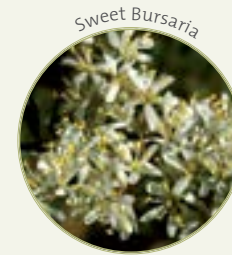
# Perfect plants for honeyeaters



Lightwood



Silver Wattle



Sweet Bursaria



Tree Violet



Native Fuchsia



River Bottlebrush

### Trees for nectar

- Lightwood or Hickory Wattle (*Acacia implexa*)
- Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*)

### Shrubs for shelter

- Hedge Wattle (*Acacia paradoxa*)
- Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*)
- Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentatus*)

### Shrubs for nectar

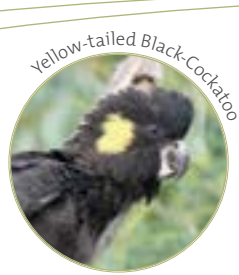
- Native fuchsias (*Correa glabra* and *Correa reflexa*)
- River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sieberi*)

### Other Australian plants you might like to include

Banksias, grevilleas, hakeas and smaller eucalypts have long-lasting nectar-producing flowers and provide shelter and nesting spots.

All indigenous plants suggested in this book have been recommended by the Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-operative (VINC) and are available, along with other suitable plants, from their nursery at Yarra Bend, Fairfield. VINC is a not for profit co-operative and nearly all the stock sold is propagated from seed and cuttings from local plants. Contact VINC on 03 9482 1710.

# A garden full of *parrots*



Boroondara is blessed with lorikeets and cockatoos and other colourful parrots. Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos can be heard calling as they fly overhead in small flocks. They use their powerful, hooked beaks to rip and tear into trees and gouge out large juicy grubs. In winter, Gang-gang Cockatoos leave their tall mountain forest homes to visit the suburbs. They are sometimes seen in Maranoa Gardens feeding noisily on seeds and gum nuts.

## Inviting parrots to your garden

- Parrots enjoy resting and feeding in indigenous trees. Several different **species of eucalypt will provide flowers and seeds** at different times of the year. It is important to make sure the trees you plant will not grow too large for your block.
- Some parrots spend time on the ground in search of fallen seeds or stripping seeds from grasses. Long-billed Corellas use the long hook on their beak to dig out starchy tubers. Parrots find it easier to find food in **native grasses and mulch** than on mown lawns.



Eastern Rosella

## Tree hollows in your garden



Tree hollows provide vital nesting sites for some birds. If you do have an older tree in your garden that needs to come down, consider leaving part of the tree in place to provide a perching spot and nesting hollows. Your arborist may be able to create small hollows in the trunk suitable for animals such as microbats.

## Parrots local to Boroondara

- **Rainbow Lorikeets** will visit any Melbourne garden with eucalypts. Lorikeets have round, brushy tongues and compete with honeyeaters for pollen and nectar. They are particularly aggressive so plant some dense bushes in which smaller birds can hide.
- **Red-rumped Parrots** feed mostly on the ground and live around the Yarra's parks and golf courses.
- **Musk Lorikeets** can be seen flying high overhead in small flocks. They like eucalypts in heavy flower and hang upside down to feed on the flowers. They are very noisy and are seen often at Summerhill Park when eucalypts are flowering.
- **Long-billed Corellas** are seen overhead in flocks or on the ground digging for starchy tubers.
- **Eastern Rosellas** don't make much fuss. They call quietly as they munch through the eucalypt blossoms.
- **Australian King-Parrots** will escape the colder hills and mountains in winter and may visit your garden. These beautiful birds forage on seeds and fruit.



Rainbow Lorikeets



Red-rumped Parrot



Australian King Parrot



Long-billed Corella



Musk Lorikeets

# Perfect plants for parrots

Yellow Gum



## Trees for flowers and seeds

- Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*)
- Black She Oak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*)
- Lightwood or Hickory Wattle (*Acacia implexa*)
- Blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*)

Black She Oak



## Shrubs for seeds

- River Bottlebrush (*Callistemon sieberi*)
- Teatree (*Leptospermum species*)

## Grasses and tufting plants for seeds and berries

- Tussock grass (*Poa labillardieri*)
- Rough Spear-grass (*Austrostipa scabra*)
- Smooth Flax-lily (*Dianella longifolia*)
- Black-anther Flax-lily (*Dianella revoluta*).  
Eastern Rosellas love to eat the berries from these lilies.

Black She Oak flower



## Other native plants

*Banksias* and *hakeas* also provide seed and nectar for parrots.

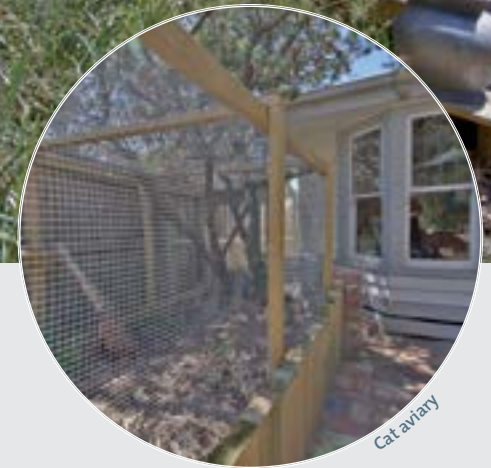
Teatree



Black-anther Flax-lily



Banksia



Cat aviary

“

My home is my workplace and my haven. I have a corrugated iron art studio and other outbuildings that are tucked amongst the trees. Thick banksias and other shrubs and trees hide fences so I have a real sense of being in the bush.

My garden has always been a bird-friendly no-cat zone and I place water bowls for the birds around the base of trees. When my daughter brought home a cat, I built a cat aviary that connects to the house to keep the wildlife safe.

Phil, Surrey Hills

”

# A chorus of garden birds



Silvereye feeding young

In your garden, the majority of birds will fill themselves with insects and spiders. Watch a feeding magpie — it pecks the ground with its powerful but fine-tipped beak a dozen times a minute, snapping up tiny insects. Only occasionally does it hit the jackpot with a cricket or grasshopper.

A handful of birds will also gobble down fruit. The small, chubby Silvereye can swallow a quite large berry.

## Inviting other birds to your garden

- Many garden birds need **indigenous trees with dense canopies** because these trees have the best variety of insects on which to feast. Indigenous and native shrubs host more beneficial insects than introduced plants.
- Other birds find their food on the ground. They will poke around **mulched soils, leaf litter and native grasses** searching for grubs and insects.
- **Shrubs are essential.** Many smaller birds will weave through these safe havens while searching for food. Some small birds will nest only in bushes.
- **Native grasses** host a staggering amount of insect life. These insects might be hard to extract but they provide a constant supply of nutritious food.



Indigenous plants with berries are much better for the environment than introduced plants with berries. When birds eat introduced berries they can deposit the seeds in the bush where they grow and become problem weeds.

# Garden birds local to Boroondara



Tawny Frogmouths

- **Tawny Frogmouths** rest on tree limbs by day. At night they often hunt near lights that attract insects.
- **Silvereyes** move through the trees and bushes in your garden feeding on insects and berries.
- **Eastern Yellow Robins** often pounce on their insect prey from a low branch.
- **White-browed Scrubwrens** feed on the ground or in low bushes in constant search of insects.
- **Brown Thornbills** form small flocks with other small birds as they move through trees and bushes seeking out insects and spiders.
- **Superb Fairy-wrens** live in family groups. Adult siblings care for their younger brothers and sisters.

White-browed Scrubwren



Brown Thornbill



Superb Fairy-wren



Eastern Yellow Robin



Tiny Superb Fairy-wrens were once common in our area but, over a long period, many of the bushes that provided them with cover and nesting places were removed and they were unable to withstand constant hunting by cats. They are now returning to parts of Boroondara where Council has planted indigenous shrubs and trees extensively, for example along Gardiners Creek at Markham Reserve, Ashburton.



# Perfect plants for other garden birds

Hop Goodenia



Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea



## Trees for flowers and insects

→ Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*)

## Shrubs that attract insects

→ Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*)

→ Gold-dust Wattle (*Acacia acinacea*)

→ Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*)

→ Wedge-leaf Hop-bush (*Dodonaea viscosa*)

→ Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea (*Daviesia leptophylla*)

## Dense shrubs that provide good shelter

→ Prickly Currant Bush (*Coprosma quadrifida*)

→ Rock Correa (*Correa glabra*)

→ Tree Violet (*Melicytus dentatus*)

→ Large Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum laciniatum*)

→ Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*)

## Grasses and tufting plants for seeds and berries

The easy-to-grow Common Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardierei*), along with Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia spp*) and Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), provide a fantastic source of seed and insects for garden birds.

Black-anther Flax-lily (*Dianella revoluta*) and Saltbush (*Atriplex spp.*) produce fruits that are eaten by many species.

Common Tussock Grass



Gold-dust Wattle



Prickly Currant Bush



Austral Indigo



Caper White Butterfly on attractive indigenous rice flowers.

# Butterflies, dragonflies and other garden insects

Butterflies and moths start life as caterpillars. They must lay their eggs on the correct plants if the caterpillars are to feed. Each butterfly and moth species has its own special plant. It may be a wattle, eucalypt or an indigenous grass or shrub. Butterflies and moths will move over large distances to find a mate and find the right plants on which to lay their eggs. You can grow most of these plants in your garden. Butterflies can't chew leaves, they suck nectar from flowers, so it is important to include plants such as daisies that provide both a platform on which the insects can land and nectar to sip.

The more indigenous plants you have in your garden the more native insects you will have. The insects will help create a balance, pollinating plants and providing food for larger creatures. Large numbers of pest insects tend to occur when plants are not indigenous.

Native grasses provide a great home for insects and are drought tolerant.



Australian Painted Lady



Common Brown Butterfly



Common Grass-blue



Dingy Swallowtail



Yellow-banded Dart

# Local garden butterflies and dragonflies

- The **Australian Painted Lady** may visit your garden in spring and summer. They feed and lay their eggs on everlasting daisies.
- **Common Brown Butterflies** emerge in spring. Their caterpillars benefit from native grasses. The males die before the females.
- **Common Grass-blues** are small and delicate, flying very low in search of flowers. Their pale blue eggs may be laid on Austral Indigo and other native pea plants.
- The large **Dingy Swallowtails** can be seen fluttering around citrus trees where they lay eggs and feed. Their caterpillars will not harm your citrus trees.
- The **Yellow-banded Dart** (skipper butterfly) is a small, hairy butterfly found around your garden flowers. Like other skippers, it has a green caterpillar.
- Adult **dragonflies** are fierce hunters snatching other flying insects in midflight. Males are territorial. The underwater nymphs (mudeyes) are equally terrifying predators.



Dragonfly

# Perfect plants for butterflies and insects



Burgan



Clustered Everlasting

## Trees with shredding bark for insects to hide and lay their eggs beneath

→ Yellow Gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon*)

## Shrubs with nectar-producing flowers for butterflies and other insects, and leaves for caterpillars

→ Austral Indigo (*Indigofera australis*)

→ Sweet Bursaria (*Bursaria spinosa*)

→ Hop Goodenia (*Goodenia ovata*)

→ Burgan (*Kunzea ericoides*)

## Wildflowers that provide nectar

→ Local Bluebells (*Wahlenbergia* species)

→ Shiny Everlasting (*Xerochrysum viscosum*)

→ Clustered Everlasting (*Chrysocephalum semipapposum*)

→ Cut-leaf Daisy (*Brachyscome multifida*)

## Grasses on which butterflies lay their eggs

→ Common Tussock Grass (*Poa labillardierei*) and Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*) both attract Common Brown Butterflies and provide a home for a range of insects.

→ Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) is an excellent choice for Skipper butterflies but watch the sharp leaves.



Shiny Everlasting



Bluebells



Spiny-headed Mat-rush

# Inviting *frogs* to your garden

Can you hear frogs call at night? Frogs and their tadpoles have had a tough time in built-up areas and are now rare and under increasing threat.

## Redressing the balance for frogs

Consider building a shallow pond or frog bog, especially if you live near existing wetlands or waterways. A frog bog is a very shallow pond covered with water plants. A little bit of shade is good for a small pond but it will become polluted if too many leaves fall into the water.

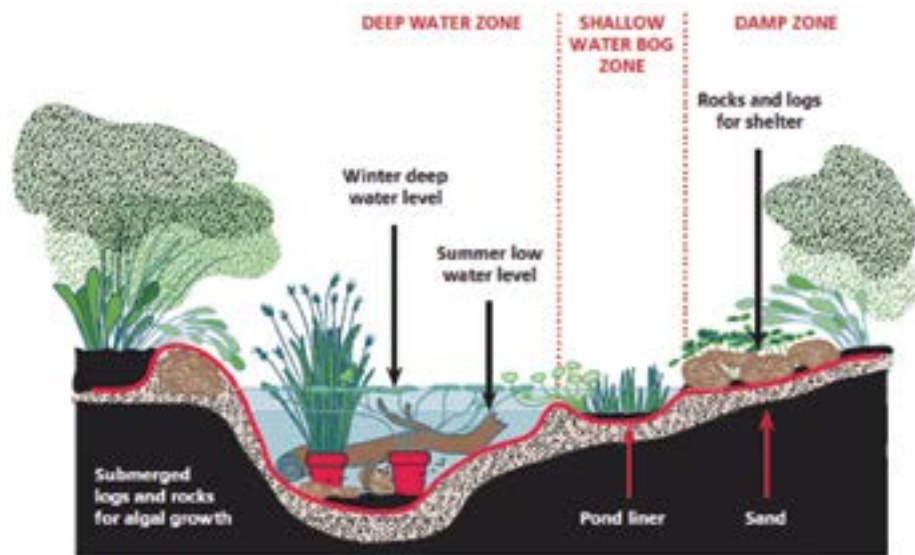
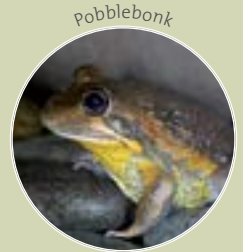


Image: Sustainable Gardening Australia (SGA)

1. Obtain water plants from your indigenous nursery. Try Nardoo (*Marselia drummondii*), Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*) and White Purslane (*Neopaxia australasica*). These plants will flourish in your pond, providing food and protection for tadpoles.
2. Create hiding places by planting Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*) and Loose-flower Rush (*Juncus pauciflorus*) and placing small logs and rocks on the soil beside the pond.
3. Never place fish in your pond. They will eat the frogs' eggs. Avoid water pumps — they damage tadpoles.

# Frogs that may come to your frog pond in *Boroondara*

- **Pobblebunks** fill the air with their amazing call. It's the males begging the females to be their partners.
- **Common Froglets** are tiny. They are the most common frogs in eastern Australia. The male's call sounds like a cricket chirping.
- **Southern Brown Tree Frogs** are found in Maranoa Gardens on the trunks of tree ferns and other plants. They are known to leap to catch an insect in mid flight.



“

Our pond originally had goldfish. To transform it into a frog pond, we dug out all the mud to remove all the fish eggs. We put in a few different types of aquatic plants that grew very quickly. We also planted lots of indigenous grasses and other native plants around the pond for the frogs to hide in. It took a little while for the frogs to come, but they did! Soon we (and our neighbours) heard the amazing calls of Pobblebunks also known as Banjo frogs. These calls have now stopped and other frogs, which we think are Common Froglets, are now living in the pond and calling at night. We think the Pobblebunks might be hiding under the soil waiting for the next big rain.

Jo and Bill, Ashburton

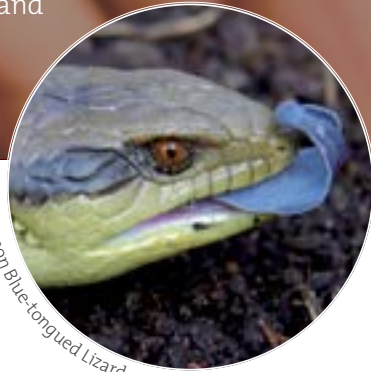
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# Letting lizards lounge in your garden

Do you have tiny skinks scurrying through your leaf litter? Or have you seen blue-tongued lizards in your garden? Small reptiles are active mostly in the warmer months but lizards and skinks have declined steadily in suburban gardens because of injury from dog and cat attacks and lawn mowers.



Common Blue-tongued Lizard

## Inviting lizards to your garden

- Reptiles are solar heated so include **some warming rocks** in your garden as lizard lounges.
- **Leaf litter and mulch** provide places where lizards can hunt for insects and other small creatures.
- Lizards need some rocks and logs to hide under at night and when it's cold. These also provide **shelter from cats and dogs**.
- **Avoid using snail baits** (even the pet-friendly ones) in your garden as blue-tongued lizards will die if they ingest either snail bait or the dead snails.

## Lizards seen in Boroondara gardens

- **Marbled Geckos** are nocturnal and you will most likely find them asleep under a log or in a garden shed.
- **Common Blue-tongued Lizards** are very useful for eating snails and other garden pests. The females give birth to about six live young at one time.
- **Garden skinks** eat animals so tiny you can't see them with your naked eye.

## Perfect plants for lizards

### Grasses and rushes for food and shelter

- Wallaby Grass (*Austrodanthonia spp*)
- Tussock Grass (*Poa spp*)
- Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)
- Spiny-headed Mat-rush (*Lomandra longifolia*)
- Loose-flower Rush (*Juncus pauciflorus*)

### Plants for berries

- Saltbushes (*Atriplex semibaccata*, *Einadia nutans*, *Enchylaena tomentosa*) produce berries that skinks like to eat.



Kangaroo Grass

Snakes should not be on your garden invitation list. Snakes usually bite only when they are provoked and feel threatened. If you find a snake in your garden, call a wildlife specialist to remove it. Search for 'snake handler' in the Yellow Pages.



Saltbush berries



Wallaby Grass





Ringtail Possum

# The secret lives of our native mammals

We believe Boroondara is still home to around 11 different native mammal species. Most of these furry creatures shy away from humans and only a couple are likely to visit your garden. If you walk through bushland along the Yarra River you might just see the amazing but rare Platypus. These shy creatures share the river with the Rakali (Australian Water-rat), which has a distinctive white-tipped tail.

- **Ringtail possums** are small, cute and harmless marsupials that eat gum leaves and blossom — their favourite food tree is the Narrow-leaf Peppermint Gum. They prefer to build nests in trees not in your roof.
- **Microbats** are mouse-sized insect-eating bats. You can hear their high-pitched squeaks at night as they fly through the air catching insects. Microbats, such as Gould's Wattled Bat, need tree hollows or nest boxes to roost in. Indigenous plants in your garden will provide insects on which they feast.
- **Grey-headed Flying-foxes** have their daytime camp within Kew's Yarra Bend Park. At night, they leave the Yarra in search of nectar and pollen from eucalyptus flowers.
- **Brushtail possums** are not our most popular garden residents and visitors. The best way to keep these animals out of your roof space is to close up any entry points. Consider providing a nest box in your larger trees.



Echidna

## Close encounters of the prickly kind

Parks and Gardens staff working at Council's Kew Depot were surprised to find an echidna living in their gigantic mulch pile. A couple of echidnas have ambled into the depot over the years, probably in search of mates. Our prickly little friend was discovered after it hitched a ride to the City of Darebin in the mulch truck. It was then returned by car to the Kew Depot where staff made sure it was safe.

“

I have always thought that we are so lucky to have such remarkable and unique native wildlife in Australia, and eight years ago decided to do what I could to help them.

I joined Wildlife Victoria, trained in wildlife rehabilitation at Victoria University, became a foster carer and finally, a registered wildlife shelter. I'm currently caring for about 20 rescued Grey-headed Flying-foxes. When they are ready, they will all be returned to the wild.

These bats are classified as a threatened species and about one quarter of Melbourne's colony has been wiped out by heatwaves in just 14 months.

Many of the flying foxes that come into my care have been caught in netting put around backyard fruit trees. If people want to cover their trees in netting, they should buy the white, knitted variety and make sure it is strung taut over the tree. If they have the old, single-strand black netting, they should pull it down. Flying foxes have terrific eyesight but that netting is very hard to see and cuts and tangles bats dreadfully. The injuries can be horrific and sometimes fatal.

Anyone who finds an injured bat should not attempt to handle it and should call Wildlife Victoria's 13 000-WILDLIFE (13 000-94535). Other injured native animals can be taken to any vet, who will treat them at no cost.

Bev, Ashburton

”



Grey-headed Flying Fox

# Maintaining your habitat garden

Backyards planted with indigenous and native plants usually need less maintenance than gardens planted with exotics.

## Feeding your plants

Australian soils have low nutrient levels and Australian plants have adapted to grow in these conditions so they rarely need fertilising. Keeping your garden mulched will help return nutrients to your soil and, in many cases, this is enough.

## Pruning

Giving your plants a light prune after flowering encourages them to invest energy into new and healthy growth rather than seed production. Pruning also prevents plants from becoming twiggy and untidy. Some Australian plants can be pruned into a hedge or topiary to suit more formal gardens. Indigenous grasses and some lilies can be cut right back after flowering or they can be dug up and divided to produce additional plants for your garden.

## Watering

Australian plants, planted in correct conditions, generally require little watering except after planting. Having a rainwater tank in your garden provides a ready source of fresh water. Use grey water in moderation and alternate with fresh water to avoid a build-up of salts in your soil that will affect the health of your plants over time.



Our garden was originally full of exotic plants which had not been well maintained and they required a lot of maintenance. When we cleared the original garden, we set about creating a framework of trees and shrubs and then gradually filled in the gaps. There are still some jobs to do to keep the plants looking good, but less work is required.

*Diana and Brian, Hawthorn*

# We encourage you to get involved

## Best of Friends

There are many dedicated friends groups that play a vital role in restoring our local environment. These locals meet regularly to help look after our parks and reserves and work closely with our Parks and Gardens staff. Join these groups to both help the environment and gain valuable skills that will help you transform your home garden. Visit Council's website for contact details for the following friends groups.



- **Friends of Ashburton Forest** work at various sites in Ashburton and Ashwood.
- **Friends of Back Creek** work between Cornell Street and Riversdale Road, Camberwell.
- **Friends of Burke Road Billabong** work at the Burke Road Billabong site, Kew East.
- **Friends of Gardiner's Creek Valley** work along Gardiners Creek between Winton Road and Great Valley Road in Glen Iris.
- **Friends of Kergunyah Wetland** work to rejuvenate the small wetland at Balwyn Community Centre.
- **Friends of South Surrey Park** work in South Surrey Park between Union Road and Riversdale Road, Surrey Hills.
- **Friends of Walmer Street** bushland work in land along the Yarra River.
- **Hawthorn Historical Society – Friends of Wurundjeri Gardens** work in the Wurundjeri Gardens, Glen Avon Road close to Riversdale Road, Hawthorn.

### Participate and learn

Citizen science offers non-scientists the chance to contribute to research projects. Council is currently working with BirdLife Australia to monitor bird communities at local reserves and encourages residents to get involved in this and other projects. Visit council's website and urban biodiversity strategy webpage to view a list of interesting citizen science projects.

## Local environmental sites to visit

- **Maranoa Australian Native Botanic Garden**, Parring Road, Balwyn (Melway 46, F7)
- **Beckett Park**, Parring Road, Balwyn (Melway 46, G7)
- **Willsmere Park**, Willow Grove, Kew (Melway 45, F1)
- **Nettleton Park**, Dawson Drive, Glen Iris (Melway 59, J7)
- **Welfare Parade**, Glen Iris (Melway 60, E8)

## Other sites to visit around Melbourne

- **Greenlink Nursery**, Box Hill North
- **Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-operative**, Fairfield
- **Kuranga Native Plant Nursery**, Mt Evelyn
- **Royal Botanic Gardens**, Melbourne and Cranbourne
- **La Trobe Wildlife Sanctuary**, La Trobe University, Bundoora
- **Melbourne Zoo** (great indigenous plantings), Parkville

## Online gardening resources

- **City of Boroondara website** ([www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/environmental-sustainability](http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/environmental-sustainability)). Visit Council's website for more information on biodiversity in Boroondara. Follow the *Living for our Future* link for details of our workshops on sustainable gardening and other sustainability related topics.
- **Sustainable Gardening Australia** ([www.sgaonline.org.au](http://www.sgaonline.org.au))
- **Birds Australia's Birds in Backyards** ([www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net))
- **Flora for Fauna** ([www.floraforfauna.com.au](http://www.floraforfauna.com.au))
- **Australian Plants Society Victoria** ([www.apsvic.org.au](http://www.apsvic.org.au))



# Finding gardening books

There are many great books about gardening with native plants and gardens for wildlife – here are just two:

*The Australian Garden: Designing with Australian plants* by local resident, Diana Snape (published by Bloomings Books, 2002).

*The Flora of Melbourne: A Guide to the Indigenous Plants of the Greater Melbourne Area 3<sup>rd</sup> edition* is a technical but very comprehensive reference compiled by members of the Australian Plant Society, Maroondah Inc. (published by Highland House, 2001).

Your local nursery or bookshop may be able to make further recommendations or you could visit specialist bookshops at the Royal Botanic Gardens (Cranbourne and Melbourne) or the CSIRO's website ([www.csiro.gov.au](http://www.csiro.gov.au)). Boroondara's libraries also have a wide selection of books available for loan.

## Credits

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This booklet is designed to help you, your neighbours and friends protect and enhance our local biodiversity by creating wildlife-friendly gardens. Even small changes will make an important contribution to biodiversity and your enjoyment of your garden. Some of our residents have kindly shared some of the ways they have used indigenous and native plants to create wildlife wonderlands. We hope this booklet inspires you to take your first steps or further develop a special space for biodiversity in your garden.

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