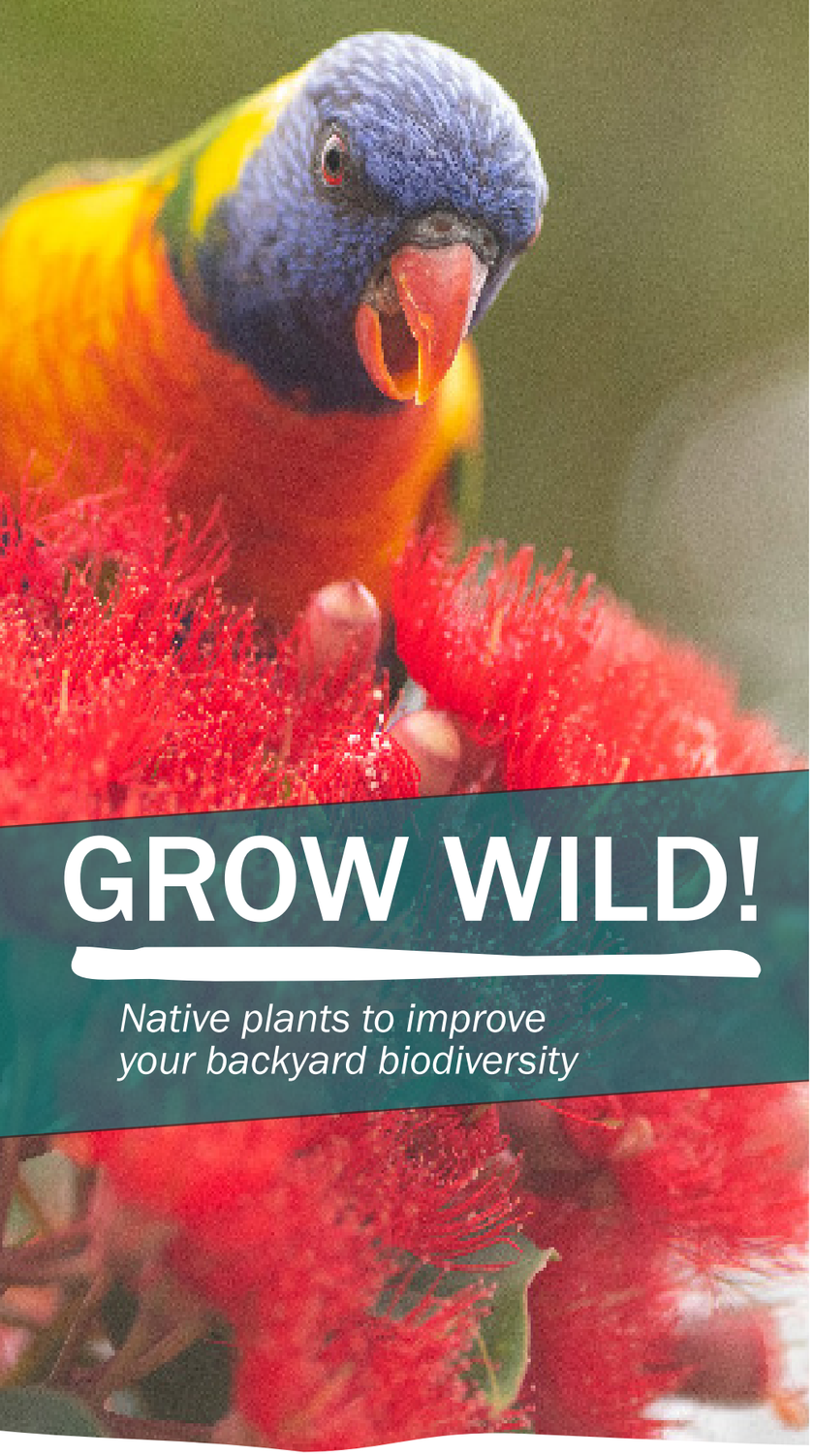


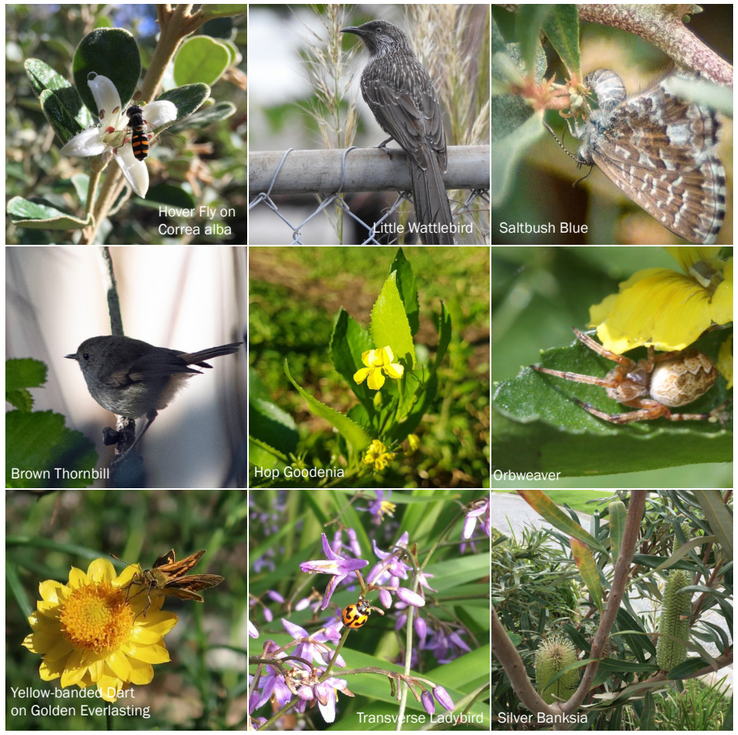
GROW WILD!

Native plants to improve your backyard biodiversity

City of Port Phillip respectfully acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Clan of the Boon Wurrung. We pay our respect to their Elders, both past and present. We acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land.

Along with public parks, gardens on private land can help enhance biodiversity and improve our wellbeing. Beautiful, hardy native gardens suit a changing urban climate because they require minimal water, reduce hard surfaces and can shade buildings from the hot afternoon sun, thus reducing heat stress and energy consumption in our homes and workplaces.

What benefits us can also benefit urban wildlife! Just like people, animals in cities and suburbs need shelter from harsh weather and predators, and reliable access to water and food. The wildlife food chain starts at the very small scale of insects, and so will our design considerations.



Proudly supported by the City of Port Phillip

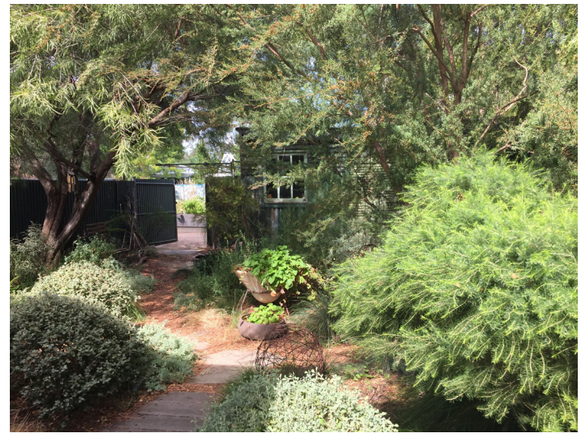
PORT PHILLIP ecocentre

State Government Victoria
Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning

Gardens help wildlife

Our suggested native plants are suited to the Port Phillip area and for small spaces, including some that are suited to balconies (where noted). They will help provide essential food, breeding sites and shelter to increase your backyard biodiversity.

Think like a forest! Plant to establish different heights and flowering seasons in order to increase the range of microhabitats in your garden. Grow a variety of flowering trees and shrubs, climbers, grasses and wildflowers to provide shelter, food, and attract beneficial insects and birds. Insects are key for a biodiverse garden as they are food for birds, reptiles, spiders, frogs and mammals—such as microbats.



From little things...

A native landscape can provide sheltered microhabitats, or small aspects with specialised features compared to the surrounding patch. For example, clusters of native grasses provide low, wind-resilient nooks for many colourful and helpful insects to lay eggs. Arranging rocks or a log provides cool, moist hiding spot for geckos.

In your garden, as in the wild, each design feature will create multiple linked benefits to enjoy over time. For example, most seed and nectar-feeding birds also eat insects, which provide essential protein for raising babies. This is why many of our iconic birds breed in spring, which is peak insect season if you have provided them with habitat. Such seasonal observations will become a rewarding rhythm as you establish your wildlife garden.

Garden Planning

Gardens that combine ground-storey plants with low to mid-storey shrubs and taller trees will provide a range of microhabitats to support the greatest diversity of native animals. Large trees are not always practical in sites with limited space that also need to accommodate paths and powerlines. Conversely, many suburbs have plentiful trees but too little of the native mid-storey beloved by songbirds. The challenge is to provide the best mix of plants and structural habitat for local wildlife and people.

The first step is to note the existing conditions and available space in your garden. This will help you consider a wildlife friendly garden that suits your maintenance regime and the weather conditions of your garden. A good idea is to sketch a map of your garden with existing features and conditions listed here, and take this to the nursery so they can help choose suitable plants.

Observe existing conditions

Aspect	The aspect of your garden (full sun, part shade and shade) will determine which plants will suit the environment. Is the planting area exposed to hot afternoon sun or shaded? Does your garden face north or west (sunny), or east or south (shady)? Is your garden exposed to harsh salt wind?
Water	Our dry climate means we are facing a situation where water scarcity is an issue. Reliable access to rainwater, preventing evaporation by using mulch, and creating a water wise garden will help the plants and animals. Is there an accessible bird bath, pond or area of moist soil?
Existing Plants	Catalogue which plants are currently in your garden and how each can benefit biodiversity. Which plants will you keep? Are they weedy and hard to maintain? Do they attract beneficial animals to the garden? Are they attractive and healthy? Note: dead branches may be useful sites for birds to rest and roost.
Available Space	Consider how tall and wide trees or shrubs might grow before planting. Will they become over-crowded or compete with other plants? Are there any property services that could be impacted by plants, e.g. garden paths, underground water or gas pipelines or overhead powerlines?
Nearby Habitats	Your garden can become a pathway for animals to safely move around. Are there existing habitats nearby, e.g. large trees or parks, that your garden could link to?
Local Fauna	Understand which animals exist locally. Some may visit seasonally and not be visible at the time you are planning or planting. Explore the websites listed at the end of this brochure to learn about your region.

Observe constraints and reduce threats

Invasive Weeds	Do you already have invasive weeds in your garden that need to be removed? Consider removing plants that take over and limit diversity of other species. Replace such plants with native groundcover or apply mulch to control weeds. Stage weedy plant replacement over time, to allow existing insect life to relocate while new habitat plantings gradually establish. Ask your local nursery or Port Phillip EcoCentre if you are not sure which plants are considered weeds.
Aggressive & Territorial Fauna / Predators	Can you look for ways to provide shelter and protection for wildlife of all types (see plant table)? Ensure domestic pets have a bell or collar that makes a noise to alert wildlife. Some birds (such as the noisy miner) harass other birds to leave. Grow dense, mid-storey shrubs to provide protection for smaller birds.
Climate Change	Our average annual rainfall has reduced over the past 30 years. As we face more variable conditions into the future, it is important to plant drought tolerant native plants, mulch beds, and consider water-saving irrigation. Can you install a rainwater tank or incorporate a slope to divert stormwater?

Helpful contacts

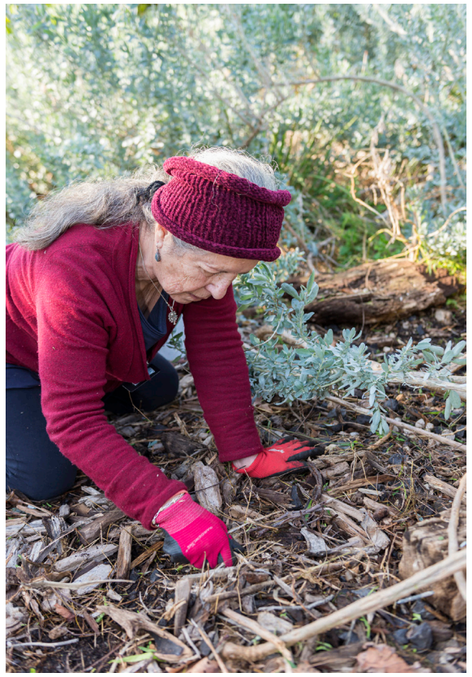
Indigenous plant nurseries

Bili Nursery
525 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne
Phone: 9645 2477

Bayside Community Nursery
319 Reserve Road, Cheltenham
Phone: 9583 8408

Information on local wildlife

Port Phillip EcoCentre: www.ecocentre.com
iNaturalist: www.inaturalist.org
Birds in Backyards: www.birdsinbackyards.net



Leaf litter and mulch contributes to a healthy soil food web.

This brochure was produced as part of the City of Port Phillip NatureSpot Project, funded by the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning,
Caring for Our Local Environment grant program.

Some plant photos supplied thanks to Westgate Biodiversity Bili Nursery & Landcare.

Produced by Port Phillip EcoCentre, May 2020.

Selecting Plants

Key considerations for a good garden are selecting plants that are adapted to our local soils (generally well-drained and sandy). They also need to be happy in the prevailing conditions: available sun, rainfall patterns, and winds, including windborne salt affecting plants near the Bay. Seasonal flowering to add colour is also highly desirable! First shortlist plants that suit the existing conditions of your garden, and then consider these four key elements for wildlife:

White Correa (*Correa alba*) is an excellent source of food and shelter for local wildlife.

Food

Our native animals feed on one or more sources including seeds, fruits, leaves, plant roots and nectar from flowers, as well as insects and bugs attracted to these foods. To provide abundant nutrition for wildlife, select plants that bloom across a mix of seasons, allow plants to go to seed and encourage insects into your garden. Trees, shrubs and waterways support insect populations, so microbats and some birds may be spotted catching dinner mid-air above such features.

Shelter

Wildlife can shelter in tree hollows, under flaking bark, in dense foliage such as shrubs, high in a tree canopy, under fallen logs and leaf litter, and among aquatic plants. Native shrubs provide refuge and food for small birds and are much needed in urban areas.

Enhancing Habitat Structure

Climbers can be planted along fences to enhance vertical habitat. Installing insect hotels and nest boxes can also provide suitable refuge for wildlife as your garden develops.

Breeding

Breeding can involve bird nests high in tree canopies, in tree hollows, and in dense or thorny vegetation. Insects lay eggs on plant leaves, under dense groundcover, amongst aquatic plants, or under bark, leaf litter and fallen branches. Leaf litter, bark and mulch are home to a community of ground-layer bugs and help to retain carbon and soil moisture. Allow leaves to decompose naturally instead of sweeping them up.

Austral Stork's-bill (*Pelargonium australe*) is suitable for balconies and provide great shelter.

Local Native Plants

Small Trees		Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 4m	↕ 6m	Upright tree.	Flowering time: Dec–Jan (White)	Butterflies, Bees
		Silver Banksia *Banksia marginata*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 3m	↕ 5m	Tall shrub.	Flowering time: Sep–Apr (Yellow)	Birds, Bees
		Scented Paperbark *Melaleuca squarrosa*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 2m	↕ 5m	Upright tree, good hedge.	Flowering time: Sep–Feb (Cream)	Butterflies
Shrubs		Coast Saltbush *Atriplex cinerea*	Full Sun ↔ 2m	↕ 1m	Sprawling shrub, can be pruned. Suitable for balconies.	Silver-grey foliage	Butterflies
		Sweet Wattle *Acacia suaveolens*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 2m	↕ 2m	Low shrub. Responds to pruning. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Apr–Aug (Cream)	Caterpillars, Butterflies
		White Correa *Correa alba*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 3m	↕ 2m	Dense spreading shrub. Good hedge.	Flowering time: All year (White)	Shelter, Nectar
		Twiggy Daisy-bush *Olearia ramulosa*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 1m	↕ 2m	Prune to promote flowers. Suitable for balconies. .	Flowering time: Sep–May (White)	Bees
		Native Fuschia *Correa reflexa*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 2m	↕ 1m	Low shrub.	Flowering time: Mar–Sep (Light green/red)	Nectar
		Hop Goodenia *Goodenia ovata*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 2m	↕ 1m	Low shrub. Regular pruning. Suitable for balconies..	Flowering time: Aug–Feb (Yellow)	Caterpillars, Butterflies

Grasses		Coast Spear-grass *Austrostipa flavescens*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 75cm	↕ 1m	Upright tussock. Well-drained soil.	Glistening seed heads	Shelter, Reptiles & Frogs
		Prickly Spear-grass *Austrostipa stipoides*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 1m	↕ 1.5m	Upright tussock. Slow-growing.	Golden seed heads	Shelter, Reptiles & Frogs
Climbers		Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*	Full Sun to Part Shade		Sprawl on ground or climb on structures. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Jul–Nov (Purple)	Caterpillars, Butterflies
		Small-leaved Clematis *Clematis microphylla*	Full Sun to Part Shade		Climbs over plants or structures. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Jul–Nov (Cream)	Shelter
		Common Appleberry *Billardiera scandens*	Full Sun to Part Shade	No Salt Winds	Climbs over plants or structures. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Jul–Jan (Cream)	Berries
Wildflowers		Common Everlasting *Chrysocephalum apiculatum*	Full Sun ↔ 1m	↕ 30cm	Mass plant floral display. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: All year (Yellow)	Caterpillars, Butterflies
		Rounded Noonflower *Disphyma crassifolium*	Full Sun		Hardy succulent. Easy to grow. Suitable for balconies and as groundcover.	Flowering time: Oct–Feb (Hot pink)	Bees
		Tufted Bluebell *Wahlenbergia communis*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 40cm	↕ 30cm	Mass plant floral display. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Nov–May (Mauve)	Bees
		Austral Stork's-bill *Pelargonium australe*	Full Sun to Part Shade ↔ 50cm	↕ 40cm	Prune old growth. Suitable for balconies.	Flowering time: Oct–Feb (White/pink)	Shelter
		Native Violet *Viola hederacea*	Full Sun to Part Shade		Grows in gardens or hanging baskets. Suitable for balconies and as groundcover.	Flowering time: All year (White/violet)	Shelter

Conditions

Shade: Full Sun; Full Sun to Part Shade; Full Sun to Near Full Shade; Full Sun to Full Shade; Part Shade to Full Shade

Wind: Salt Winds; Moderate Salt Winds; No Salt Winds

Fauna

Bees; Butterflies; Caterpillars; Birds; Reptiles & Frogs; Shelter; Nectar; Berries