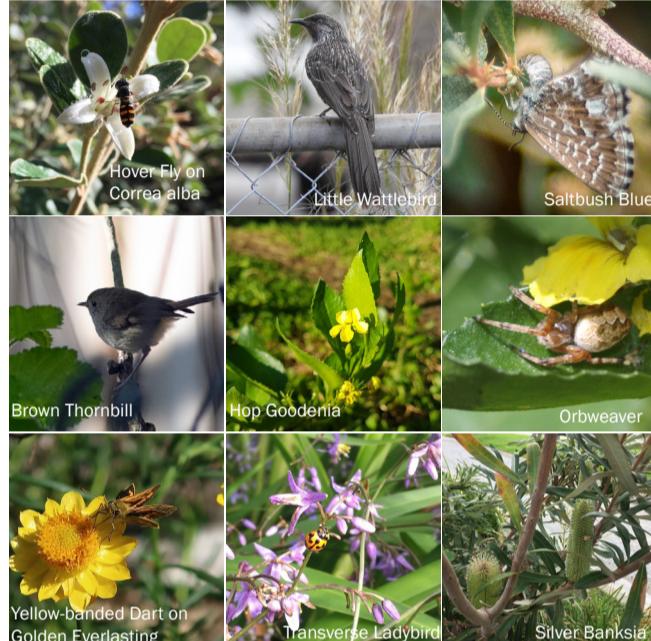


Garden Planning

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.



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're 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?

Produced by Port Phillip EcoCentre, May 2020.

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

which habitat. Such seasonal observations will become a rewarding

in spring, which is peak insect season if you have provided them

protein for racing babies. This is why many of our iconic birds benefit

and nectar-feeding birds also eat insects, which provide essential

nutrition linked benefits to enjoy over time. For example, most seed

and litter feed mulch contributes to healthy soil web.

in your garden, as in the wild, each design feature will create

arranging rocks or a log provides cool, moist hiding spot for geckos.

resilient nooks for many colourful and helpful insects to lay eggs.

patch. For example, clusters of native grasses provide low, wind-

resists with specialised features compared to the surrounding

aspects. Native landscape can provide sheltered microhabitats, or small

litter and mulch contributes to a healthy soil web.

A native landscape can provide sheltered microhabitats and

nesting sites for birds, reptiles, spiders, frogs and

insects and birds. Insects are key for a biodiverse

garden. Grow a variety of flowering trees and shrubs, climbers,

grasses and wildflowers to provide shelter, food, and attract

pollinators and beneficial insects and birds. Insects are key for a biodiverse

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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:



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

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.

Local Native Plants



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.

Enhancing Habitat Structure

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.

	Grasses	Climbers	Wildflowers

	Small Trees	Shrubs	Conditions