



Kingston
Gardens for Wildlife





City of Kingston

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*We do not own the planet
Earth, we belong to it.
And we must share it
with our wildlife* - Steve Irwin

Gardens for Wildlife

Gardens for Wildlife is a free program that helps residents develop wildlife friendly habitat in their gardens.

With increased urbanisation comes a decrease in natural habitat and a fragmentation of plant and animal communities. By increasing habitat in our residential gardens, as a community we can create important stepping-stones for wildlife to thrive and move through our neighbourhoods.

The Gardens for Wildlife program at the City of Kingston offers:

- A free garden assessment (on site or online) to discuss how you can increase habitat in your garden
- Resources such as indigenous plant lists
- Educational workshops and events throughout the year
- Volunteer opportunities to get involved in biodiversity projects

For more information and to register visit:
kingston.vic.gov.au/g4w



Habitat Gardening

A wildlife friendly garden or a habitat garden is one that has been designed with the intent of providing shelter and food sources to attract local wildlife.

Our outdoor spaces are full of opportunity. Habitat gardening is not about replacing all your plants with native species. It is about looking at your garden and finding ways of enhancing it to attract more wildlife. You can start off slow and work in a staged approach; each step adding value to the natural ecosystem and transforming your yard.

Try looking at your garden with fresh eyes to determine the value of each plant. Plants not contributing to habitat, sentimental or aesthetic value can be gradually replaced with species that provide greater habitat value. Replacing with indigenous and native plant species is ideal and recommended because these species are more naturally suited to the local environment and will better support local fauna.

Observe your garden through the seasons so you have a good idea of the areas that receive sunlight and shade. Learn about the different soil types that may be present in your garden. Some soils are sandier and will drain rapidly; others have a higher clay content and will hold moisture for longer. Taking the time to learn more about your site, sunlight and soil conditions, will allow you to make informed decisions and select the most suitable plants for your space.

Insects and animals use plants for food, shade, shelter, socialising, nesting and as transport corridors. By creating wildlife friendly gardens, we're not only providing habitat for local fauna but we're also protecting the natural world and contributing to biodiversity.

Whether you have a large established garden or a small balcony, there are many elements you can add to enhance your space and provide habitat opportunities for wildlife to visit.



Why is Biodiversity so Important?

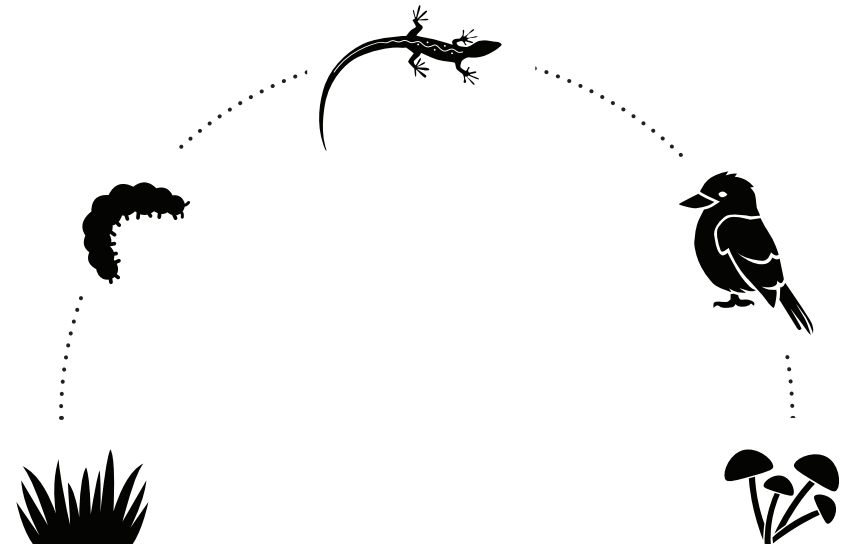
Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal species in a given area. Biological diversity is essential to the healthy functioning of our natural ecosystems, contributing to clean air, clean water and fertile soils.

The greater the variety of creatures in your garden, the closer it resembles the natural ecosystem. A high level of biodiversity is important for sustainability - diverse habitats are more resilient to change whereas habitats with little biodiversity are more vulnerable to disruption.

Often, the most overlooked species are the ones that play critical roles in biological processes. Creatures such as worms, fungi and bacteria living in our soils play a crucial role in soil health. Insects are not only essential for pollinating flowering plants but they're also responsible for decaying organic matter and returning nutrients to the soil.

Think about all the biological interactions that occur in your garden. Once you begin to understand that all these processes are interconnected, you'll gain a greater appreciation of all the components of your garden and why it is just as important to provide insect habitat as it is to provide bird habitat. They all depend on each other.

It is that range of biodiversity that we must care for - the whole thing - rather than just one or two stars - David Attenborough



Key Elements of a Habitat Garden

The fundamental elements of a wildlife friendly garden are:

Shelter

All animals require shelter from predators, places to nest and opportunities to refuge from bad weather.



Food

Plants provide food sources such as nectar, pollen, fruit, seeds and leaves.



Water

To help attract wildlife to your garden provide a variety of water sources that are safe from predators.



The greater the variety of food, water and shelter opportunities in your garden, the greater the variety of creatures your garden will support.

Attracting Wildlife to Your Garden

1 Structural Plant diversity

Including a variety of species and a mix of structural layers in a garden will encourage a diverse group of animals.

Tall trees are important for providing habitat for larger birds such as owls and parrots; whereas dense prickly shrubs are great for smaller birds to shelter from predators.

Including a mix of trees, shrubs, grasses, groundcovers and climbers provides animals with a variety of food sources such as seeds, pollen and nectar. It also contributes a greater choice of habitat for more wildlife to visit.

2 Nectar plants

Plants with rich nectar producing flowers, will attract honeyeaters as well as many other birds, butterflies, bees and mammals.

Nectar plants with an open habit and terminal flowers are suitable for the large honeyeaters to move about and they will tend to dominate in these areas so it is important to also provide the right plants for small honeyeaters to access. Plants with prickly, dense foliage and small flowers along the stems are great for the smaller birds as they find it easier to hide away when larger birds try to compete.

3 Native grasses

Grasses and strappy leaved plants are an important habitat for a variety of creatures, providing shelter, food and nesting materials.

Butterflies and moths use some grasses as a safe space to lay their eggs; birds use grasses for nestbuilding; reptiles such as

skinks and other lizards use grasses to shelter from birds; the seeds and leaves from some grass species provide a food source for insects, birds and small mammals.

4 Variety of flowers and colours

Flower colour, scent and shape play an important role in attracting pollinators such as birds, butterflies and bees.

Daisies for example, provide a flat open platform for butterflies and hoverflies to land on, allowing them to easily feed on the plant's nectar.

Butterflies are also attracted to a range of flower colours, particularly blue, red and yellow. To invite more butterflies to your garden, plant groups of colourful flowers together.

5 Water sources

To attract a variety of creatures, provide a variety of water sources, particularly in the warmer months.

A shallow dish of fresh water in an elevated position will provide a safe place for small birds to drink and bathe. If you place this dish near a small prickly bush, the birds have somewhere to escape if a predator arrives.

Including a stick or small branch in a shallow dish of water on the ground, provides a stepping platform for lizards and small reptiles whilst a small soil puddle or a dish with damp sand will provide butterflies with essential minerals and salts as well as a water source.

 Find them all on the next page!



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Attracting Wildlife to Your Garden

6 Tall mature trees, tree hollows and nest boxes

Tall trees represent geographical markers and lookout posts for large birds.

Mature hollow-forming trees such as Eucalypts are highly valuable habitat; they provide nesting sites for large birds and mammals as well as homes to a variety of other creatures including insects, lizards, spiders and frogs.

In the absence of tree hollows, nest boxes in your garden are a great way to provide a similar habitat. Different creatures need different sized hollows so think about which creatures you'd like to attract when considering nest boxes.

7 Dense and prickly bushes

Dense and prickly bushes with fine leaves provide shelter for small birds whilst also providing nesting and socialising habitat for small mammals and reptiles.

Plants such as Sweet Bursaria grow their flowers both on the outside of the plant and on the stems and branches hidden within the plant. This provides an opportunity for animals and small birds to feed safely away from predators.

8 Branches, mulch and leaf litter

Fallen trees and branches represent shelter for ground dwelling animals such as lizards, as well as providing a food source for decomposers such as insects and fungi.

Mulch and leaf litter in the garden provide habitat for invertebrates such as ants, beetles and worms, in turn providing tasty insect treats for small birds and reptiles.

9 Rocks and logs in a sunny position

Skinks and other lizards need heat from the sun, so including some rocks, logs or paving in a sunny position gives these creatures the opportunity to sun themselves and regulate their temperature.

10 Frog bog

Native frog species are experiencing a decline in numbers due to habitat loss, feral animal predation and environmental changes such as pollution and use of pesticides. Although frogs can live in a variety of places such as trees, vines, grasses and soil, most species will lay their eggs in water and will require damp spots and a permanent water source of varying depths.

 Find them all on the previous page!

General Tips

Responsible Pet Ownership

As Kingston has a dusk to dawn cat curfew, cats must be kept confined to your property at night to protect nesting birds, native animals and reptiles.

Be mindful of regulations in bushland areas. Keeping your dog on a leash whilst walking along bushland, canals and waterways helps keep wildlife safe.

Use of Chemicals in the Garden

Reducing or avoiding use of herbicides, fungicides and insecticides in the garden will have a positive effect on biodiversity. Indigenous and native plant species are naturally more resistant to pests and infections, therefore reducing the need for chemicals in the garden.

Nature Strip Planting

Kingston residents can plant low shrubs, grasses and groundcovers on their nature strips but must adhere to the Nature Strip Guidelines before making any modifications.

Residents can also request Council to plant a street tree on their nature strip.

Actively respecting, protecting and preserving our flora and fauna is a small act with the potential to make a big ecological impact - Habitat, AB Bishop

Indigenous and Native Plants

Indigenous plants have evolved to thrive in the environment in which they naturally occur.

Some of the benefits of planting local indigenous plant species:

- They have evolved to suit the local conditions and will therefore perform well
- They will have a higher resistance to disease, thus decreasing need for chemical pesticides
- They attract local native wildlife
- They contribute to the biodiversity of the local area
- They contribute to the distinctive local character of the area
- They enhance wildlife corridors and provide links between fragmented habitat areas

Exotic plants will also attract wildlife and provide food and nesting materials however local plant species will provide a natural habitat more resilient to existing conditions. By gradually introducing more indigenous and native plant species, you can help support local ecology at a deeper level.

Environmental Weeds

Plant species that are invasive and out-compete native plants are known as environmental weeds. They are a serious threat to the survival of indigenous flora and fauna as they compete for light, nutrient and water.

For more information about Kingston's indigenous plant species and environmental weeds please visit kingston.vic.gov.au/g4w

Vegetation Communities

Prior to European settlement, rich and diverse vegetation communities such as heathlands, woodlands and wetlands dominated the local landscape. Only samples of these remnant vegetation communities remain and can be found at local Natural Reserve Areas. By planting local plant species, you are not only providing the right environment for local insects, birds and mammals to find suitable habitat, you are also helping to protect endangered and vulnerable species.

Indigenous plants

are the local native plant species that occur naturally in a particular location.

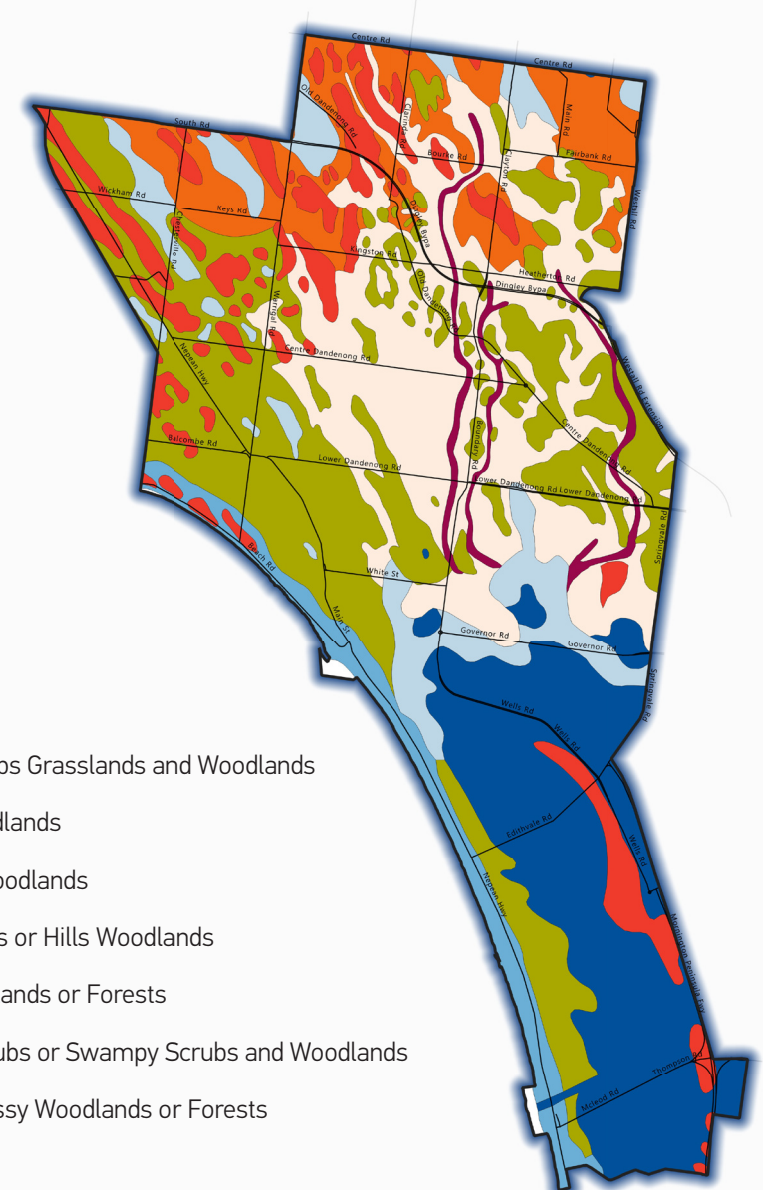
Native plants

are plant species that occur naturally in a particular area, such as Australia.

A particular species may be native to a certain country but considered as indigenous only to a specific area within that country.

Kingston Vegetation Community Groups

This map illustrates eight key original vegetation community groups for the City of Kingston. Plant lists of the typical indigenous species that occur in these community groups, are available through the Gardens for Wildlife program.



Bushland Areas

Kingston has a diverse range of biodiversity including wetlands, heathlands, woodlands, grasslands and the Port Phillip Bay coastline.

There are many bushland and natural resource areas where you can find examples of local indigenous vegetation. Reserves such as Grange Heathland Reserve and Kingston Heath Reserve are valuable natural spaces where Council is preserving and maintaining remnant indigenous flora, fauna and vegetation communities.

In line with Kingston's Biodiversity Strategy 2024-2029 the Gardens for Wildlife program aims to increase community awareness, appreciation and understanding of our precious environment. We actively encourage our residents to participate in their local community by increasing vegetation cover in their backyards and contributing to links with natural resource areas and green corridors.

Friends Groups

City of Kingston has many dedicated community groups that play a vital role in restoring our local flora and fauna. These groups meet throughout the year and volunteer to help protect and preserve Kingston's natural environment.

The wildlife and its habitat cannot speak, so we must and we will

- Theodore Roosevelt

Local Nurseries

Visit one of many local indigenous plant nurseries to purchase your garden plants and for expert plant selection advice.

Run by some staff and supported by community volunteers, these nurseries specialise in producing quality indigenous plant stock from seeds and cuttings collected locally and propagated on the premises. Opening hours are limited so please check with individual nurseries for more details.

Bayside Community Nursery

315-317 Reserve Road,
Cheltenham 3192
🌐 bayside.vic.gov.au/community-nursery

Bili Indigenous Nursery

525 Williamstown Road,
Port Melbourne 3207
🌐 westgatebiodiversity.org.au

Briars Nursery

The Briars, 450 Nepean Highway,
Mount Martha 3934
🌐 www.mornpen.vic.gov.au/Environment/The-Briars/Briars-Nursery

Carrum Indigenous Nursery

Learmonth Reserve - Cnr Learmonth and
Thompson Rds, Patterson Lakes 3197
🌐 carrumindigenousnursery.com.au

Conservation Collective

52 Westernport Highway,
Somerville 3912
🌐 conservationcollective.shop

Frankston Indigenous Nursery

32R McMannis Way,
Seaford 3198
🌐 frankston.vic.gov.au

Greenlink Sandbelt Nursery

587 Heatherton Road,
Clayton South 3169
🌐 greenlinksandbelt.org.au

Useful Links

Atlas of Living Australia

🌐 ala.org.au

Australian Plant Society Victoria

🌐 apsvic.org.au

Birdlife

🌐 birdlife.org.au

City of Melbourne Urban Biodiversity

🌐 biodiversity.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

🌐 deeca.vic.gov.au

Gardens for Wildlife Victoria

🌐 gardensforwildlifelifevictoria.com

Habitat Stepping Stones

🌐 habitatsteppingstones.org.au

iNaturalist

🌐 inaturalist.org

Melbourne Water Frog Census

🌐 www.melbournewater.com.au/education/citizen-science/frog-census

Sustainable Gardening Australia

🌐 sgaonline.org.au

VicFlora

🌐 vicflora.rbv.vic.gov.au/flora

Weeds Australia

🌐 weeds.org.au

Wildlife Victoria

🌐 wildlifelifevictoria.org.au



