

WHAT ARE LOCAL PLANTS?

Local plants are species that naturally occur in your neighbourhood and are therefore adapted to the local climate, conditions and soil.

WHY GROW LOCAL PLANTS/WA PLANTS?

- **Local wildlife, fungi and insects are adapted to local plants. Replanting with local plants can help bring wildlife back to the suburbs.**
- **Bushland reserves have become islands of natural vegetation in a sea of development. Local plants can provide corridors for wildlife movement, particularly along watercourses.**
- **Some introduced plants have become major bushland weeds. Eradication of bushland weeds is difficult and very expensive.**
- **Local plants represent our heritage; they teach us about nature and provide a local identity or 'sense of place'.**

GARDEN ESCAPEES

Garden plants can climb over fences and the seeds are dispersed by birds, insects, water, and wind. Garden plants that escape into bushland can become serious weeds and threaten the biodiversity values of the local environment. If you live near the bush areas or dunes in Cottesloe please do not plant the following introduced plants which have all become serious weeds in our natural areas - Freesias, Watsonia, Arum Lily, South African Daisy, Gazanias, Margeurite Daisy (white) and Yellow soldiers. See the attached list for a better choice for your garden and the local environment.

Please do not ever discard garden weeds in the bush or on the dunes.

GARDEN PLANNING & DESIGN

There is a huge range of local WA plants that can be used to create many contemporary garden styles such as cottage, formal, Mediterranean and bushland. Be creative with local plants and use them in hanging baskets and containers, as hedges and as topiary.

Garden Design Tips

You can use local plants in your whole garden, in a garden bed or mixed in with exotics.

- Think of your garden like a room in your house and plant in stages. Lay the carpet (groundcovers) in first, place the furniture (theme shrubs and trees) and then dress the room with the smaller flowering shrubs and feature plants. Plan your garden design on graph paper.
- Make sure you prepare the site and remove all weeds prior to mulching or planting.
- Group plants with similar water and fertiliser requirements together. Keep in mind the growing requirements of plants (ie: don't plant a sun loving shrub in the shade of a larger shrub).
- Keep in mind views from the house (ie: good views to retain and eyesores to be hidden).
- Think about areas of usage (eg: eating areas, play areas) and incorporate these into the design.

GROW LOCAL PLANTS

- Plant trees at least 3m from the fence so they aren't hampered and don't become a nuisance.
- Try to vary the height layers in your garden to add interest and bird habitat. (ie: tree canopy, shrubs, groundcovers).

PLANT SELECTION & PLANTING OUT

- Buy plants local to your area or suited to your soil type (see list).
- Buy seedlings, which aren't root bound as they will better establish in the garden. You can buy some larger feature plants for an instant effect.
- Always read the labels to check the ultimate size of the plant to be sure that you are getting the desired plant form.
 - Coastal plants will grow inland, but inland plants don't grow well on the coast.
- Don't choose plants that are environmental weeds.
- Plant in late April or May after the first good autumn rains, as plants have more time to establish before summer.

WA Plant Nurseries

Nurseries have varying ranges of WA plants. If you want particular plants, order in September for planting the next autumn.

APACE Nursery:	1 Johanna St, NORTH FREMANTLE
Lullfitz Nursery:	Caporn St (cnr Honey Rd) WANNEROO
Men of the Trees:	Cnr Amherst Rd & Stirling Cres HAZELMERE
Muchea Tree Farm:	Lot 214 Archibald St, MUCHEA
Oakford Farm Trees:	141 King Rd, OAKFORD
Zanthorrea Nursery:	155 Watsonia Rd, MAIDA VALE
Boola Wongin:	619 Armadale Rd (near Nicholson Rd), FORRESTDAL
Carramar Coastal Nursery:	Lot 5 885 Mandurah Rd SECRET HARBOUR

WATERING

WA plants are adapted to our climate and rainfall - they are used to a bit of stress and need this to perform their best. Overwatering leads to shorter lived plants with excessive growth and less flowering. It leaches away nutrients in sandy soils and encourages diseases that can lead to fatal root rot. Remember the aim is to encourage plants to grow strong root systems, which makes them more water efficient and drought tolerant. In a garden to keep all plants looking their best it may be desirable to give some plants a supplementary watering over summer.

When to water (always follow water restrictions)

For new plants water:

- In the first few weeks after planting and over the summer period for the first 1-2 years until plants are established.
- In general over the summer period water once a week from about November to May until the first good rain occurs.

For established plants water:

- When signs of stress are apparent (eg: wilting, dull foliage colour, leaf shrinkage).
- When the soil under the surface is dry.

In general the watering regime for mature plants varies with the soil type, origin of the plant, season and natural rainfall.



Grevillea crithmifolia

Acacia lasiocarpa

Calothamnus quadrifidus

Hakea prostrata

Kennedia prostrata

What irrigation to use

WA plants like the soil surface to remain dry and many are sensitive to overhead watering (ie: sprinklers, misters). The best irrigation to use is:

- Adjustable dripper/trickle systems or subsurface irrigation.

Watering tips

- Watering is preferable in the morning. Water sitting on plant leaves and stems overnight can encourage plant diseases.
- Longer, deeper watering is more beneficial.
- If soils repel water, then you can apply a wetting agent (eg: Wettasoil).
- Use a dripper with a high flow rate for water demanding plants eg: *Boronia*.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE

Pruning

To keep WA plants looking their best, it is necessary to do some pruning as it helps to keep the plant in shape and can promote flowering.

When to prune

In general prune after flowering has finished in late spring or early summer. Avoid pruning in winter or mid summer, as plants will tend to die back extensively. It is better to prune young plants lightly and regularly. Older plants can be rejuvenated by more extensive pruning after flowering.

How to prune

There are two main types of plant flowering habits each requiring different pruning methods:

- Plants that flower on the end of each season's growth - trim off the flowering stems from behind the seed capsules after the plant has finished flowering. Regular pruning prevents these plants from becoming straggly, eg: *Callistemon* (Bottlebrush), *Pimelea*.
- Plants that flower on old wood - remove the oldest wood from the centre of the plant, leaving younger wood, eg: some species of *Melaleuca*.

Tips for pruning

- Cut off the whole branch cleanly at the join, leaving no protruding stump.
- Remove branches underneath the plant for ease of weeding.
- Use chopped up prunings as mulch.

What to prune

- Only prune the softer wooded plants (eg large wattles) lightly as they aren't as hardy as the woodier plants and tend to die back extensively.
- *Eucalypts*, *Callistemons* and *Melaleucas* respond well to pruning and can tolerate a somewhat harder prune.
- Cut back Kangaroo Paws to the ground after flowering each year. This helps prevent black ink disease and promotes better growth.

Mulch

Good mulch consists of a mixture of different sized materials such as leaves, twigs and bark, allows water to easily penetrate through to the soil and prevents evaporation. The mulch materials shouldn't absorb too much water, otherwise they make less available to the plants. Beware that mulch from unknown sources may contain serious plant diseases, such as *Phytophthora* Dieback.

When to Mulch

Organic mulches need renewing seasonally as they break down over time, but are best applied at the start of warmer weather in spring and early summer. Apply mulch to about 5cm thick. Keep the mulch away from the plant stem to avoid disease.

Fertilisers

Many native plants are highly sensitive to fertilisers, particularly fertilisers that contain phosphorus eg: *Banksias*, *Grevilleas*, *Dryandras*, *Hakeas* (*Proteaceae* family.) As WA plants are adapted to soils that are low in nutrients they generally don't require fertiliser. Fertiliser from gardens contributes to poor water quality and algal blooms.

What fertiliser to use

(Note: always follow manufacturer dosage instructions)

- Slow release fertilisers, eg: Green Label Osmocote, apply in spring when the plants are actively growing. (Not in winter or autumn as plants are dormant).
- Low phosphorus and low nitrogen fertilisers, eg: well rotted manure (not chicken manure).
- Blood and bone.
- Fish emulsion or seaweed fertiliser to boost plants immunity to disease.

REFERENCES

For more information refer to:

• **Growing Locals: Gardening with Local Plants in Perth**
R. Powell & J. Emberson, WA Naturalists Club (Inc.), 1996

• **Coastal Plants, Perth & South West Region**
E. Rippey & B. Rowland, UWA Press, 2004

• For free advice on growing local native plants for home gardens, phone the **volunteer Master Gardeners** at Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority. Telephone: 9480 3672

• **Cottesloe Coastcare Association's** website has a list with photographs of 60 local plant species.
www.cottesloecoastcare.org