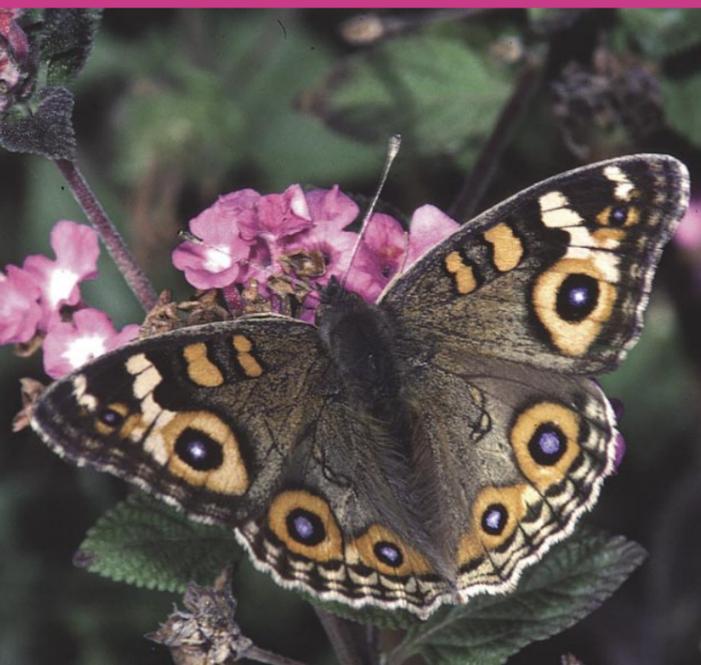




Biodiversity in your Backyard



Biodiversity in your Backyard

Biodiversity is the variety of life on our planet: the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genes and the ecosystems of which they are a part.

Australia is one of the most diverse countries on the planet. It is home to more than one million species of plants and animals, many of which are found nowhere else in the world.

Life on Earth wouldn't be the same if our biodiversity were to be radically affected. A highly diverse and complex ecosystem is a sign of health and has a positive impact on the quality of air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat, as well as providing us with materials for use in our daily lives and nature to enjoy as part of our City's natural beauty.

This is the reason the Council is committed to working with the community to enhance our biodiversity.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity is important for a number of reasons including:

- Biodiversity maintains the critical ecosystem processes that support life. Healthy, functioning ecosystems are necessary to maintain and regulate the atmosphere, climate, fresh water, soil formation, cycling of nutrients and disposal of wastes.
- There are aesthetic and cultural reasons for the maintenance of biodiversity. Our community places a high value on native plants, animals and ecosystems, which contribute to a sense of cultural identity, spiritual enrichment and recreation.

How diverse is your backyard?

You would be surprised! Do you attract native birds to your garden? What about koalas, possums or even native mice and other cute furry creatures? Are there native plants growing in your garden?

These animals and plants are often what we imagine when we talk about biodiversity – but don't forget the microscopic animals that play an important role too. Your 'diverse garden' also has butterflies, ants, native snails, earthworms, beetles, bugs and lots of other invertebrates.

If these animals don't frequent your garden, there are some simple steps you can take to provide a habitat for our native animals and insects. See the Common Local Native Plants Brochure in this pack for ideal plant types and a planting guide.

While everyone knows it's essential to conserve our native forests, often we underestimate the difference we can make by planting natives in our own gardens. The presence of native plants provides a miniature habitat for native birds, lizards, butterflies and other invertebrates. Native plants create shelter, shade, nesting places and leaf litter, prevent erosion and provide food in the form of leaves, nectar, berries, seeds, and associated bugs.

They also help to provide a wildlife 'corridor', allowing wildlife to jump easily from one feeding and/or nesting area to another, with the added benefit of giving you the enjoyment of watching nature close to home.

You CAN create your own 'native habitat' in your backyard. This brochure tells you how to begin.

What is the Council doing about Biodiversity?

To provide direction for the ongoing conservation of native vegetation and biodiversity across our City, a Biodiversity Strategy was endorsed by the Council in October 2006. The Strategy will help to ensure that future management of native flora and fauna is directed to the highest priority areas, particularly when it comes to controlling the threat of weeds and protection of significant species.

The project builds on the important community revegetation work already done by the Friends of the Billabong, Our Patch, Greening Australia and other community groups across our City.

The Council is also committed to promoting active management and retention of the City's urban trees, particularly the large local native trees such as River Red Gums and SA Blue Gums. Large trees with hollows provide important habitat for local native fauna.

Trees are considered to be important, not only to the environment but also to the social wellbeing of the community. Trees contribute to the character and amenity of the area, assist in biodiversity conservation, and provide shade and shelter for people, as well as habitat for fauna.



Hardenbergia violacea - Native Lilca
Our Patch

Threats to Biodiversity

All humans affect the environment in which they live. In order to survive, we need to have our basic needs of food, shelter and warmth met. How we go about meeting these needs is the part we play in affecting biodiversity.

Prior to European settlement, the Adelaide Plains was probably the most biologically diverse region in SA. Over the years since European settlement, most of the native vegetation in the Adelaide Plains has been cleared, and the remaining native plants and animals are finding it increasingly difficult to survive. At least 29 species have become extinct in the region since 1836. Today less than 4% of the original vegetation of the Adelaide Plains remains.

We still see native birds, lizards, bats, frogs and other animals in our suburbs, but there are far fewer different types than there used to be – our native wildlife is disappearing at an alarming rate.

At least 90 Australian species have been identified as being at risk - including koalas, wombats and some species of kangaroo, together with countless other mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and fish.

Native bushland has cultural, aesthetic and recreational importance to many Australians, but some of our unique plants and animals are under threat and we need to protect them and their habitat.

Since many native species need specific environmental conditions to survive, loss of habitat is a major cause for species being lost from local areas. If this happens across regions of similar habitat, animal and plant species can become extinct.

By creating a native habitat in your backyard, along with many thousands of Australians, you can work towards providing a diverse environment for our threatened species.

Biodiversity and Climate Change

As habitats change with the changes in temperature, rainfall and the severity of droughts and floods, hundreds of Australian species face the very real prospect of extinction. Rare species, fragmented ecosystems and areas already under pressure from pollution and deforestation are most at risk.

The dryness of the Australian continent makes our native animals and plants especially vulnerable in the face of climate change.



St Peters Billabong

“With the scarcity of water... the time is opportune to foster an appreciation of native plants which are adapted to local conditions and to develop a sustainable ‘sense of place’ related to pride in local Adelaide plants and animals”

Daniels & Tait 2005



Invasive Species

Invasive species are animals, plants, parasites or disease causing organisms that establish outside their natural range and become pests. Native species can also become invasive if transferred outside their natural range.

Many of the most damaging invasive animal species were originally introduced either for sport, as pets, or as livestock and pack animals. Some, such as the cane toad and plague minnow *Gambusia holbrooki*, were introduced to control other pests and became pests themselves. Others, such as black and brown rats and the house mouse, arrived accidentally.

Invasive plants have been introduced in a variety of ways. For example as crops, pasture and garden plants and to prevent erosion. A number of invasive plants spread rapidly and are thriving in the bush. Garden escape plants spread into parks and waterways and smother native plants. The Department for Environment and Heritage brochure ‘Environmental Weeds’ lists the weeds and garden escape plants to remove from your garden.



Dianella revoluta - Black Anther Flax-lily
K.Maitland

Making a Difference in your own Backyard

Start by:

- Growing plants that occur naturally in your area to increase the amount and type of original habitat;
- Using features such as bird baths, hollow logs, ponds, rocks and nesting boxes to improve habitat;
- Using plants grown from seed gathered from local remnants;
- Removing environmental weeds and garden escapees;
- Containing pets at night; cats are natural predators so keeping them inside an enclosed area at night significantly reduces the number of native animals such as possums, birds, frogs, lizards and insects that they kill;
- Keeping a compost bin handy for all your food scraps - composting is a great way to recycle organic matter like kitchen scraps and lawn clippings; it will create a thriving habitat for many insects and become a tasty source of garden nutrients;
- Using compost rather than fertilisers (excess fertiliser can run off your garden and into our waterways, having the potential to cause toxic algal blooms);
- Not removing fallen logs or rocks from bushland as they already provide habitat for native wildlife; and
- Developing your experience and knowledge as your garden grows;
- Relaxing in and enjoying your native garden.

Why plant natives?

There are many benefits to growing native plants that were originally in your area. Even small areas along the side of your house will help provide habitat for native fauna. The benefits include:

- promotion of biodiversity through species diversity;
- the provision of food sources for native animals;
- require less water and fertiliser and are more drought tolerant;

- protection of original genetic integrity of native vegetation;
- suited to local soil and climate;
- conserves our natural heritage;
- attracts birds and other wildlife.

The Common Local Native Plants brochure shows how attractive native plants are. You can also see them on the ground at:

- Belair National Park, Upper Sturt Rd, Belair;
- Windsor Street, Unley;
- St Peters Billabong, entry off River Street, St Peters;
- Linden Gardens, Cnr Portrush Rd & Greenhill Rd; and
- Wadmore Park, Addison Ave, Athelstone.

For information on other local native species visit www.urbanforest.on.net.

Where can I purchase local native plants?

Plants sourced from locally collected seed generally need to be purchased from specialist growers. A list of native growers is available on www.urbanforest.on.net. Not all growers sell small amounts so please check before visiting a grower. You may need to order your plants the previous year so they can be propagated. You will generally have to order plants by Nov/Dec for the following Autumn/Winter.

When should I plant?

The best time to plant is in Autumn, when the ground is still a little warm, just before the natural winter rain. This will allow the plants to establish good root growth, flourish in spring and then be well established with roots firmly in the ground to survive the summer.

Weed control before planting is important and mulching will help growth. Additional watering during the first summer may be necessary.

Top Backyard Biodiversity Tips

- 1 Plant a variety of local native plants that flower at various times over the year – this provides a year round source of food for native wildlife.
- 2 Plant native plants of different heights – the more variety you can provide in the size of plants, the greater the variety of birds and animals you are likely to attract.
- 3 Have a visible safe place for birds to congregate.
- 4 Be a responsible pet owner, keep pets inside at night, walk your dog on a lead and pick up droppings.
- 5 Use chemicals sparingly, and find alternatives wherever possible.
- 6 Remove major environmental weeds from your garden.
- 7 Compost kitchen and garden waste.

While these are small steps, they still have an impact on biodiversity. You can also get involved in biodiversity conservation in many other ways, such as Our Patch groups for revegetation working bees or Trees for Life for plant propagation. Call the Council on 8366 4555 to find out more about volunteer programs in the City of Norwood Payneham St Peters.



Lavatera plebeia - Australian Hollyhock
Our Patch

Further Information

City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters

175 The Parade, NORWOOD
SA 5067

Telephone: 8366 4555
www.npsp.sa.gov.au

Urban Biodiversity Unit, DEH

www.urbanforest.on.net/main.htm

- Backyards for wildlife
- Native Plant Lists for the Adelaide Region
- List of native plant growers
- Weed management

Trees for life

www.treesforlife.org.au

- Volunteer planting and propagation

Dog and Cat Management Board

www.dogsncats.asn.au

Our Patch

www.ourpatch.on.net
Volunteer revegetation programs

ABC Gardening Website

www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets

- Chemical use
- Weed management

Keeping Cats Happy Indoors Fact Sheet – Animal Welfare. Humane Society International

www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/newsletters/catfsh1.pdf

Threatened Species Network

www.nccnsw.org.au

- attracting birds, bees and butterflies
- pet management

References

Daniels, C.B. & Tait, C.J. (Eds) (2005) ‘Adelaide Nature of a City: The Ecology of a Dynamic City from 1836 to 2036’. BioCity: Centre for Urban Habitats, University of Adelaide.

Department of the Environment and Water Resources website: Invasive Species Fact Sheet and Biodiversity section

Urban Biodiversity Unit, DEH, “Backyards for Wildlife” website www.urbanforest.on.net/backyard.htm

Norwood Payneham & St Peters website - What is Biodiversity www.npsp.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=893

WWF Australia website www.wwf.org.au

Acknowledgements

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Other brochures in the pack include “Common Local Native Species of the Adelaide Plains” as well as “Environmental Weeds are Choking Out Native Plants” produced by the Department for Environment and Heritage.