



Merri-bek
City Council



Gardens for Wildlife

A guide for gardeners in Merri-bek

Acknowledgement of Country

Merri-bek City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways in the area now known as Merri-bek. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging, as well as to all First Nations communities, who significantly contribute to the life of the area.

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Electronic copy
PDF versions of this report can be downloaded from Merri-bek.vic.gov.au

Introduction

The area now known as Merri-bek is part of the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people.

Over a long association with the land, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people developed land management, survival and cultural practices specific to the area which supported a richness in biodiversity.

As a result of colonisation, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people were displaced and their land management techniques replaced with European styles. This resulted in the significant modification of the landscape that we see today.

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people continue to have a deep spiritual and physical connection to the land and waterways, and the indigenous flora and fauna.

Learning about the plants and animals indigenous to this area and welcoming them into our gardens will help us all deepen our own connection to nature, and work to restore the landscape.



Indigenous plants and biodiversity

Indigenous plants is the name given to the native plants that occur naturally in a given location. They have adapted to the conditions within the local environment such as the soil and climate.

These local plant species have also evolved alongside native wildlife, therefore providing the best possible food and shelter for native animals. A greater variety of indigenous plant species means more food and a more diverse habitat for native wildlife.

Habitat

The environment where an animal naturally lives or occurs.

Habitat along a creek for example, allows wildlife to move through the landscape more easily with greater access to food and shelter. Indigenous gardens act in a similar way, providing a habitat stepping stone to help local wildlife move around the landscape.

Biodiversity is critical for the health of the natural systems which provide us with clean air and water, regulate climate and maintain healthy soils for food production.

A high diversity of plant and animal species improves the resilience of local ecosystems to survive destructive events or processes, such as weed and pest animal invasion and climate change.

Biodiversity

The variety of all living things in an environment; the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, their genetic differences and the different ecosystems they are a part of.



White-plumed Honeyeater (NB)



Fungi

Original vegetation communities of Merri-bek

Millions of years ago ancient volcanoes erupted and flowed across much of Western Victoria, including Merri-bek, covering older sedimentary rocks.

Over time the volcanic basalt rock weathered and broke down to create plains of shallow soils which typify much of Merri-bek. Upon these soils expansive areas of plains grasslands and stands of open woodland established.

Overtime displaced creeks reformed and cut new channels where the extra soil moisture supported more tree and shrub vegetation.

Several areas of Merri-bek were not covered by lava flows and reveal escarpments of older sedimentary soils.

Within Merri-bek thirteen distinct native plant communities have been identified. These are referred to as Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) and are based on the plant species, vegetation structure, geological and ecological features of an area.

The adjoining map reflects the distribution of the main EVCs as they were before European colonisation. For detailed maps search NatureKit Victoria.

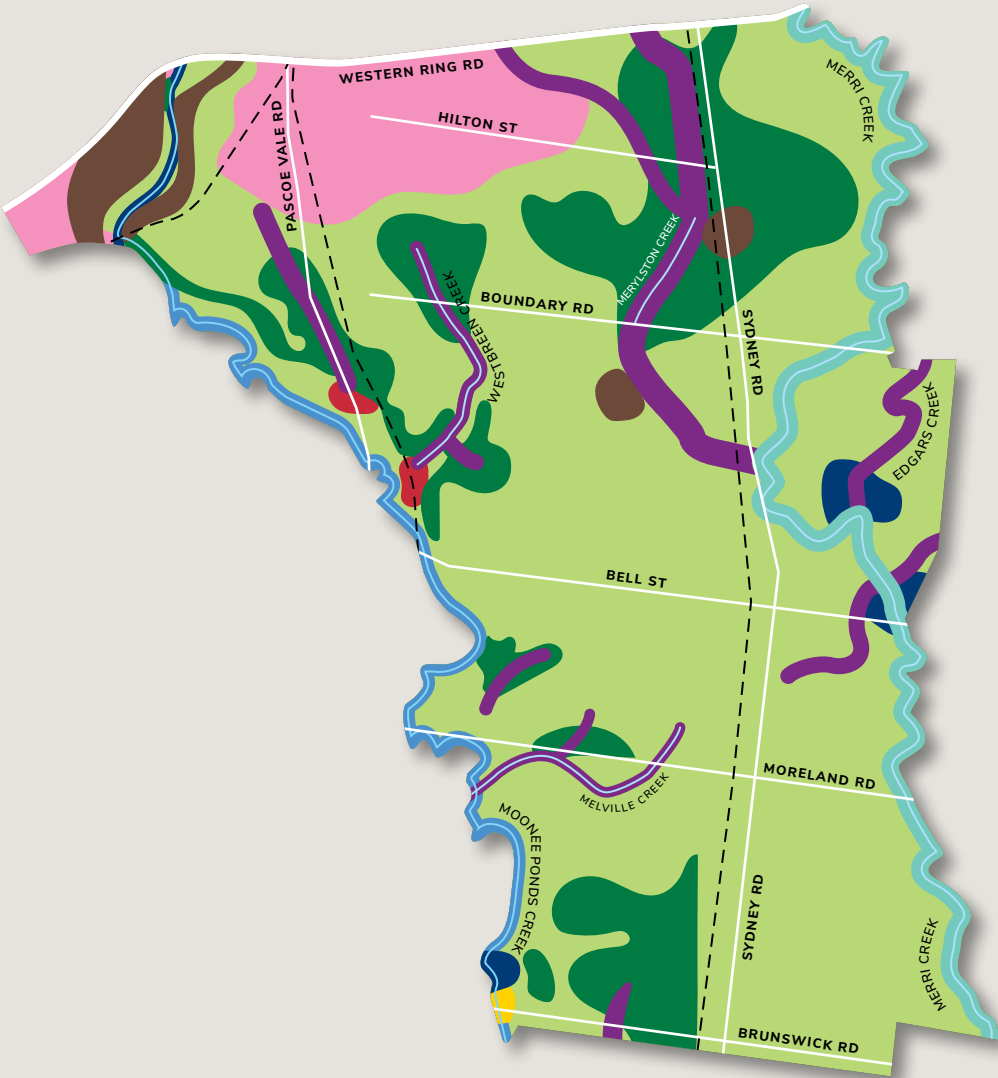
EVC key

	Plains Grassy Woodland		Streambank Shrubland
	Grassy Woodland		Riparian Woodland
	Plains Grassland		Swampy Woodland
	Escarpment Shrubland		Creekline Grassy Woodland
	Brackish Grassland		Brackish Wetland



Moomba Park Wetland

EVC map



Nature sites

Our environment is increasingly under pressure from the impacts of urban development. The threats of clearing native vegetation, climate change, population growth, introduced pests and predators, vehicles and waste all contribute to native species degradation and decline.

Despite significant urban development, Merri-bek retains some wonderful sites of natural value.

Key nature sites include the Fawkner Grasslands encompassing the significant Bababi Djinanang Grassland, and the Northern Golf Course, providing valuable sanctuaries for our local plants and animals.

Corridors along the Moonee Ponds, Westbreen, Merri and Edgars Creeks as well as wetlands such as Moomba Park, Gavin Park and Jones Park provide critical safe spaces for wildlife to rest, breed and move across our landscape.

One of the best ways to understand local plant communities, what certain native species look like and the conditions they thrive in, is to get out and observe them in their natural settings.

Merri-bek nature sites

RESERVES	1	Bababi Djinanang & Fawkner Grasslands
	2	Brunswick Central Parklands
	3	Coburg Lake
	4	Fawkner Memorial Park
	5	JP Fawkner Reserve
	6	Union Street Escarpment
	7	K W Joyce Reserve
	8	Northern Golf Course
WETLANDS	9	Jones Park
	10	Hosken reserve
	11	Gavin Park
	12	Moomba Park
	13	Jacana Wetlands
	14	Gowanbrae Parklands
	15	Edgars Creek Parkland
CREEK CORRIDORS	16	Merri Creek
	17	Moonee Ponds Creek
	18	Westbreen Creek
	19	Edgars Creek
	20	Merlynston Creek



Merri Creek

Merri-bek nature sites



Key

- Public reserves
- Private Reserves
- Wetlands
- Creek corridors

Why garden for wildlife?

Our nature sites can be strengthened and enhanced by what you do in your backyard, no matter how big or small your patch is.

Habitat corridors are pathways of vegetation that connect larger habitat areas and enable animals to move safely across the landscape to find these resources.

Through our gardens, we have an exciting opportunity to support nature in our neighbourhood. We can create gardens that provide food and shelter for wildlife and act as additional stepping stones creating those corridors between larger areas of habitat. No garden is too small to

be a wildlife garden, as each will play an important role in the habitat 'big picture'.

Establishing habitat that encourages wildlife to visit your garden can be infinitely rewarding. To watch a butterfly drinking nectar from a native daisy that you've planted, to listen to the chortle of magpies at a birdbath, or to spy microbats swooping for insects at twilight, brings joy and grows your connection to your natural environment.

Whether your garden consists of a collection of pots on your balcony or a large backyard, the addition of some native plants, a dish of water or a rock in a sunny spot will all help our native wildlife to thrive.



Leonard Street Fawkner



Moomba Park Wetland



Matted Bush-pea



Common Brown Butterfly



Chocolate Lily



Eastern Yellow Robin (NB)

How to create a wildlife garden

These are the elements to include in your garden to attract wildlife. You don't have to have all of them, every garden is part of the habitat 'big picture', so choose the elements that best suit your space.

Consider how you use your garden and incorporate elements such as a shady seat where you can sit and watch birds and butterflies.

Include **feature elements** such as a striking tree, a swathe of tussock grasses or a frog pond to create interest as well as habitat.

Consider the **flowering times** of different plant species and aim to have a year round supply of food for wildlife.

Include **habitat elements** such as bird baths near prickly shrubs for protection, large flat rocks for lizards to warm up on, or a pond with refuge logs for frogs.

Consider the **growing requirements** of each species. Group together those with similar water and light needs.

Ensure you are aware of the **mature size of your plants** to avoid ending up with a 40 metre gum tree towering over your house!

If you are thinking of replacing lots of plants in your garden, a staged approach is important. Working on small patches of your garden at a time will ensure existing patches remain for temporary shelter while the new areas mature.

The following section sets out some key considerations for maximising the habitat value of your garden.



Superb Fairy-wren (male)



Rocks for a lizard lounge

Layers

A key to creating a wildlife friendly garden is to create structural diversity – lots of plants and lots of different layers. Aim to create a mix of trees, shrubs of varying height, grasses and groundcovers.

Dead trees and shrubs also provide habitat for much of our native wildlife. Likewise, logs, rocks, sticks, mulch and leaves on the ground can provide habitat for many local insects and lizards.

Note that logs and rocks should not be sourced from local bushland where they are already providing habitat.

Diversity

A wide variety of indigenous plants can help to provide a range of habitats, shelter and food sources for different wildlife.

A healthy balance of different predator and prey species means that no one type of creature will overpopulate and become a problem.

Aim to achieve a mixture of different plant heights, foliage densities (including open areas), plant surfaces (i.e. leaves and bark) and a range of species that flower throughout the year to provide a consistent supply of food.

Garden layers



Trees

Food and shelter for birds, possums, gliders, bats, small mammals and insects.

Small trees and large shrubs

Habitat for birds, possums, small mammals and insects.

Small shrubs

Food and shelter for birds and insects.

Grasses and groundcovers

Food and shelter for birds, lizards, frogs, small mammals and insects.

Logs, mulch and rocks

Habitat for lizards, frogs, small mammals and insects.

Gardening with wildlife in mind

There are many elements you can include in your garden to attract wildlife. Every garden is part of the habitat 'big picture', so choose the elements that best suit your space.



WATER

- 4 Elevated birdbath
- 5 Dish of water
- 6 Frog pond
- 7 Dish of sand

FOOD SOURCE

- 1 Parrot eating banksia seeds
- 2 Wren eating worm
- 3 Butterfly host plant

SHELTER

- 8 Rocks
- 9 Log
- 10 Tree hollow
- 11 Nestbox
- 12 Insect hotel

Food source (See key elements image on pp 12-13)

1 Parts of a plant, such as nectar, pollen, fruit, seeds, leaves and roots provide food for many of our native animals. Dead plant material can also be a source of food for invertebrates.

2 Insects that live and feed on the plants, mulch and soil are an important food source for many of our birds, lizards, frogs and mammals.

Small lizards, frogs, small birds and mammals are a food source for reptiles and large carnivorous birds such as kookaburras, butcherbirds and owls.

Try to resist providing artificial food. Supplementary feeding can cause health issues and alter natural population balances.

Host plants

3 Some insects, such as butterflies, only lay their eggs on certain plants known as host plants.

To encourage butterflies to visit your garden, include host plants such as native grasses, legumes, sedges, wattles, daisies and herbs.

Water (See key elements image on pp 12-13)

A reliable water source, particularly in summer, will help attract wildlife to your garden. Regularly refresh the water to avoid disease or mosquitoes breeding.

4 A shallow birdbath on a pedestal next to a dense or prickly shrub will help protect birds from predators while they bathe and drink.

5 A shallow dish of water at ground level will provide a much-needed drink for lizards on a hot day. Add some branches and rocks to enable safe access for invertebrates that cannot swim.

6 Frogs need a permanent or semi-permanent water source to keep their skin moist and provide opportunities to breed.

7 Butterflies love to gather on a wide dish of damp sand or a small puddle in the soil. They take in water, essential salts and minerals from the moist soil.



Red-rumped Parrots (Female left, male right) (NB)



Golden Whistler (male)



Garden Skink eating an insect (MX)



Hover Fly on Bulbine Lily



Spotted Pardalote



New Holland Honeyeater at birdbath (CP)

Shelter (See key elements image on pp 12-13)

Native wildlife needs to find shelter from bad weather, predators and competitors. They need a refuge in which to build their homes and raise their young.

Grasses, climbers, dense and prickly shrubs and mature trees can provide protection for a large range of insect, reptile, frog, bird and mammal species.

Material such as leaf litter, sticks, bark, grasses and spider webs (for binding nests) are essential for birds to build their intricate nests to shelter their young. This material naturally builds up in a garden over time. Try to avoid 'cleaning up' so wildlife can use it.

Broad-leafed plants provide important protection from the sun, wind and rain for a multitude of insects such as butterflies and bees.

Small lizards, microbats and invertebrates shelter in crevices under bark.

Careful placement and partial burying of terracotta pots or ceramic pipes provides cool, damp shelter for frogs.

8 Logs on the ground provide shelter for small mammals, lizards, frogs and invertebrates.

Likewise, a small pile of rocks will provide shelter for lizards, frogs and invertebrates.

9 A rock or paver in a sunny spot will provide lizards and butterflies with a place to warm up in the morning.

The importance of tree hollows (See key elements image on pp 12-13)

10 Trees with hollows and the animals that depend on them are disappearing. Natural tree hollows are essential for the survival of many wildlife species. They provide refuge from the weather and predators, and safe sites for roosting and breeding. Destroying living or dead hollow-bearing trees displaces or kills wildlife dependant on those hollows.

Most species of eucalypts and other long-lived trees produce natural hollows, although it takes at least 80 years for these to develop. As old trees fall or are cleared, the loss of natural hollows has a critical impact on wildlife populations.

Try to avoid removing any established trees that contain hollows. They are essential for shelter and breeding for many birds such as parrots, treecreepers,

kingfishers and owls. Mammals such as microbats, gliders and possums also need hollows to survive.

If you are concerned about the safety of a dead tree, consult an arborist to see if they can prune the tree for habitat or salvage any hollows. These hollows can then be relocated on your property.

11 An effective way of providing an alternative to a natural tree hollow is by installing a nest box. Be aware that different species of wildlife require different nest boxes to suit their needs. Seek advice on the type of nest box required, where to locate it and how to maintain your nest box.

Think about what native animals need to survive, and try to provide that in your garden.

Natural tree hollows are essential for the survival of many wildlife species



Striated Thornbill sheltering in a wattle



Common Ringtail Possum (MN)



Rainbow Lorikeet



Southern Boobook Owl (IM)

Build an insect hotel

Have fun with the kids and make an insect hotel!

12 You can use any untreated timber to make a frame. Add a simple roof overhang to keep the rain out. Avoid glues, paints and varnishes that may be toxic. Create interesting nooks and crannies with a variety of natural materials such as straw, hollow stems, pieces of wood, rolled up cardboard and drilled timber blocks.

If you are drilling holes in wood to create burrows, drill holes of varying size ranging from 3 to 10 mm wide and 70 to 150 mm deep. Make the holes smooth and blind (not right through the timber) and slope them slightly upward to help keep them dry.

Another idea is to fill a pipe with clay and add some holes, or simply bundle together untreated bamboo and see who moves in!

Locate your insect hotel somewhere sheltered from strong sun, rain and wind. Consider making a few insect hotels and placing them in different sections of your garden. For example, a high location with exposure to winter sun and a low, shady spot.

Create a
sanctuary
for insects



Timber insect hotel



Native Blue-banded Bee



Clay bee hotel

Garden design

Creating your indigenous garden

Whether you are designing a new garden or wanting to make an existing garden more enticing for wildlife, one of the best things you can do is observe your garden for a year. This will provide an accurate picture of light, shade and moisture variation through all the seasons.

Pay attention also to your local environment and what plants thrive under local climate and soil conditions.

Think about what wildlife you would like to attract and support in your garden. Refer to the key elements of a habitat garden on pages 10 to 18.



Site analysis

The starting point with garden design is to do a site analysis of your garden. Draw a rough mudmap of your site marking the areas exposed to the hot sun and northerly winds or heavily shaded sites. This will influence what plants are appropriate for different sections of your garden.

Step 1 - What exists?

Create a scale drawing of your property. Mark in the main structural and environmental features; fences, shed, outdoor taps, clothesline, patio or paved areas, rainwater tank, overhead powerlines, any views to be retained or areas to be screened.

Take note of the path of the sun and how it creates sunny and shady areas in summer and winter.

Some questions to ask, and challenges that can be addressed with good garden design, might be:

- Do paved areas near windows reflect the hot summer sun into your house?
- Are there areas that are in constant shade?



Simple soil test

Time to get your hands dirty! This basic test will help you to determine if you have sandy, loam or clay soil. Be aware that your soil may vary across your garden, so it is a good idea to test from different areas.

1. Take enough soil to fit in the palm of your hand.
2. Wet the soil a little at a time until it is just damp.

- Are there drainage issues causing the ground to be too wet or dry?
- Do you have an area where the wind funnels through?

If you are unsure of the location of utility services on your property, visit Before You Dig Australia byda.com.au

3. Knead it into a ball or sausage.

If your ball feels smooth and can be shaped like plasticine without breaking, your soil is clay.

If you can't mould your soil or it falls apart easily, you have sandy soil.

If your sample forms a spongy ball, but is a bit crumbly, then it is a loam soil.

Example of a site analysis



Step 2 - What are your needs?

Create a wish list and ask yourself what you need or want in your garden. Would you like:

- A kickabout space for the kids?
- An area for outdoor dining?
- A sunny spot close to the house for a herb garden?
- To attract certain wildlife or keep others coming back?
- A tree that provides shade in summer and lets the sun through in winter?
- A sunny spot for the compost bin?
- More screening for privacy?
- To reduce or remove lawn?
- A chicken run or pet enclosure?

Make a note of any initial work that would need to be done with each option e.g. garden bed edges curved out; relocate clothesline; break up concrete slab. Also note the structural elements of a habitat garden that you need e.g. a birdbath, log or rock in a sunny spot.

Step 3 - Look at your plants

It is important to work with your site. You don't need a complete garden makeover. Take stock of your garden as it is and ask:

- What are the existing plants in your garden?
- Are they indigenous, native or exotic?
- Are your plants grouped together according to their water and nutrient needs?
- Are there weed species that need to be replaced with a native alternative?
- What mature trees do you have in the upper layer?
- Are there any hollows?
- Is there room to nominate a space for a large tree that will have room to grow away from the house, any neighbouring properties or overhead powerlines?

Step 4 - What is your style?

Indigenous plants can be used to beautiful effect in almost any style of garden.

Whether you prefer a formal, cottage, contemporary or bush garden, indigenous plants are suitable. Many can be hedged, grouped together in pots or grown as a beautiful feature such as a tree or sea of grasses or wildflowers.

Create a wish list

Cottage garden style

Attract birds and butterflies

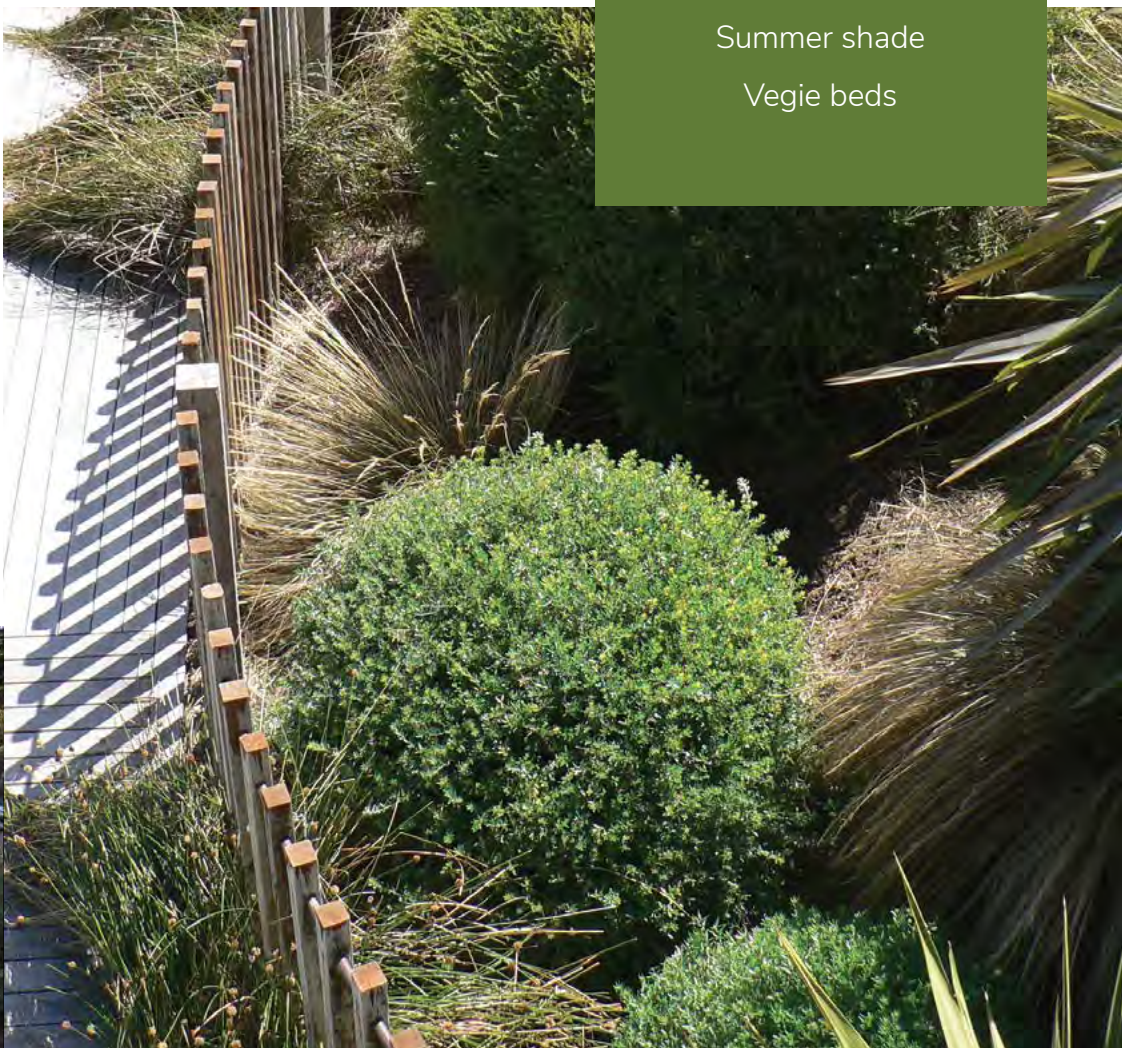
Space for kids

Privacy

Compost area

Summer shade

Vegie beds



Step 5 - The research

Find out what indigenous plants grow in your area and which ones you like the look of. There is a useful list on pages 45-55 of this booklet to get you started.

Head down to the local native nursery for further advice on which of these plants are suited to your site conditions and space, and what is available.

Use your research to make a list of the plants you want to create your garden.

Estimate the number of plants and the cost of purchase. Also estimate the cost of materials such as pavers, rainwater tanks and raised vegie beds if you need them.

Consider if you will need to hire help such as a plumber to install a rainwater tank, or a landscaper to build a retaining wall. Due to cost and time you may need to investigate alternatives or complete your project in stages.

Step 6 - Develop a plan

Once you have decided what you want and what you can realistically manage, you can play with your garden plan, exploring different options. Tracing paper overlays can work well at this stage.

Decide what needs to be done first i.e. the big jobs such as removing weed trees or installing a rainwater tank. Then allocate the remainder of your plan to stages.

Focus on one area at a time so you are not overwhelmed. Remember, it doesn't all have to be done immediately. In fact it can be beneficial to complete changes over time, to avoid displacing any existing wildlife.



Example of a garden plan



Courtyard gardening

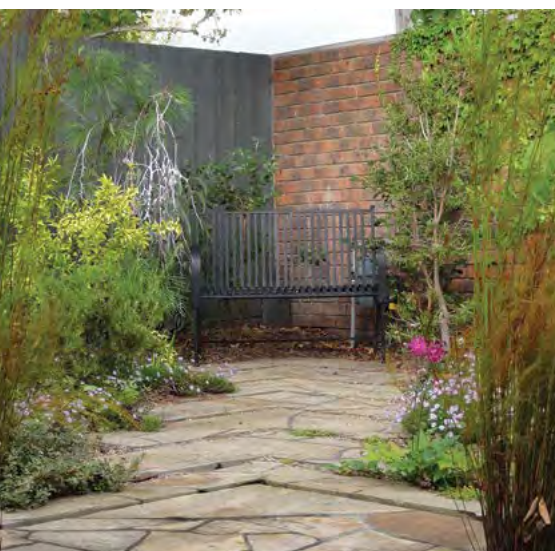
A courtyard garden can be a wonderful private retreat to relax or entertain. They are generally small spaces, and the following issues need to be considered when developing your courtyard garden.

- Courtyards often have limited access to sunlight. If this is the case, select shade tolerant plants or place pots on caddies (pot bases with wheels) that can be moved about easily.
- Courtyards tend to be paved and enclosed potentially creating quite hot conditions especially in summer. While plants will help to cool the area, make sure you include an efficient watering system as their water requirements will be high.
- Poor drainage and flooding can be problems with courtyards that are mainly paved surfaces. If this is the case, use container pots with saucers and don't overwater.
- Courtyard space can be quite limited. You can create an illusion of a larger space by using mirrors and layering plants. Think about using your vertical spaces by espaliering trees on a wall, install tiered shelving, vertical gardens, hanging baskets or window boxes.
- Courtyard gardens often contain a lot of pots. Containers look great when they are grouped together. To create a sense of space and depth select pots of different sizes and group them from smallest pot size at the front to larger pot size at the back.

Balcony gardening

Balconies offer a great space to relax and flex the green thumb. Typically, balcony gardens consist of pots or small, free-standing raised beds. Consider the following issues when designing your balcony garden.

- If you live in a flat or unit check to see if your body corporate has any specific rules relating to what you can put on your balcony.
- Avoid putting too many large pots on your balcony. Remember containers get even heavier when you water them. Secured hanging baskets, tiered shelving and window boxes are other options to include.
- Balconies can be quite exposed to high wind potentially resulting in pots toppling over or plants dehydrating. Select wind tolerant plants that don't grow too tall and avoid light plastic pots. You can also attach a screen to your balcony railing to reduce wind exposure.
- Select plants that will grow in the conditions of your balcony. If you have a south facing balcony you will need shade tolerant plants. North facing balconies will require sun tolerant plants. Most plant labels will indicate the sun/shade preference of a plant.
- Potted plants can dry out very quickly so consider self-watering pots or check regularly.
- Make sure excess water runoff is collected in pot saucers. Neighbours will not appreciate water cascading down from your balcony every time you water.
- Ensure pots cannot fall and cause safety issues or damage by securing them to your balcony.



Pot of Cut-leaf Daisies



Indigenous plants work just as well as exotic plants

Nature strips

Vegetated nature strips provide a range of benefits to the community and the environment and a great way to extend your wildlife garden.

Nature strip gardens can reduce stormwater runoff, help to cool the streets, provide habitat for wildlife, and even improve social connections in your neighbourhood. People love to stop and chat while you're out gardening!

Merri-bek City Council supports the beautification of nature strips in accordance with our Nature Strip Guidelines available on our website merribek.vic.gov.au/living-in-merri-bek/parkingand-roads/nature-strips/.



Planting and garden maintenance

There are four important elements to planting a successful wildlife garden

PLANT SELECTION | SITE PREPARATION | PLANTING TECHNIQUE | MAINTENANCE

Plant selection

Success in the garden starts with choosing the right plant for the right spot.

To find the ideal spot for your plant, consider its soil, moisture and sunlight requirements and potential size when fully grown. Plant labels and nursery staff can assist you with selecting suitable plants. Also consider how plants may interact with each other, especially the impact large trees may have in your garden as they mature.

It's a good idea to know exactly where you are going to plant something. This will help avoid failed plantings or other issues in your garden. For example, if not carefully selected and positioned, large trees may shade out sun-loving plants underneath them, impact nearby buildings or plumbing with their vigorous roots, or create problems with leaves dropping in gutters.

When choosing plants from a nursery, remember that plants in larger pots will not necessarily give you better results. Tubestock (plants in 15cm tall plastic tubes) will generally catch up with and outgrow larger, more mature stock. They are also easier to establish in difficult sites with poor soils.

For information on plants which are local to Merri-bek refer to pages 45-55 of this booklet.



Tree selection for urban gardens

Across the city, the trees in our streets, parks and in private gardens are all part of Merri-bek's urban forest. The urban forest provides critical ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, urban cooling, air and water filtration, shade and habitat. Trees enhance our health and well-being, and connect us to nature.

A well positioned tree in your garden can shade and cool your home, protecting you from summer heat. You can help to grow our urban forest by planting a tree in your garden.

For more information and advice on tree planting in urban gardens check our

website. The Merri-bek Tree Finder tool can help you choose a suitable species.



merri-bek.vic.gov.au/trees-in-merri-bek



Lightwood (*Acacia implexa*)

Site Preparation

The success of your planting will be enhanced if your site is well prepared.

Weeds

Weeds should be controlled prior to planting to reduce competition and post-planting maintenance.

Hand weed any pest plants from the site. Avoid spraying weeds with chemicals as incorrect application can be harmful to soil organisms. If spraying chemicals is the only alternative it is best to consult with an experienced operator.

When weeding, try to minimise disturbance to the soil as much as possible. Tilling or excessive digging can destroy the important fungi in the soil which are crucial to the overall health of your garden and plants.

Pre-planting mulch

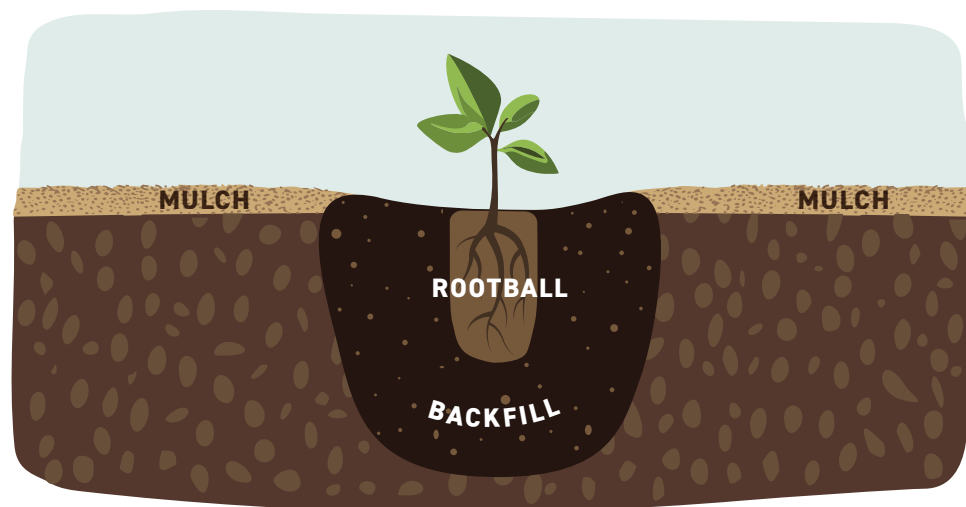
Mulch is an important part of the garden because it reduces weed growth, adds nutrients to the soil and helps hold water in the soil. Over time it will improve soil structure and encourage beneficial soil organisms such as earthworms.

Bush mulch is ideal for an indigenous garden. When spread on your garden it will create a natural leaf litter look and provide habitat for insects and lizards to shelter and feed.

Water your soil before laying mulch. Spread your mulch to a depth of around 10cm.



Planting out



1. Give your potted plant a good soak in a bucket of water prior to planting.
2. Pull back the mulch from where you want to plant.
3. Dig a sloping, shallow hole 2 to 3 times the width of the root ball and as deep as the root ball.
4. Fill the hole with water and allow it to drain before planting.
5. Upend your pot. Any roots protruding through the bottom can be pruned before removing from the pot. To remove the plant from the pot, hold it upside down and gently tap it out of the pot. Note, there is generally no need to tease or separate the root ball unless the plant is severely root bound. It is better not to disturb the root system.
6. Place the plant in the hole so that the top of the root ball is flush with the surface level or even slightly lower.
7. Backfill loose soil around the plant and press down firmly.
8. Build a circle of raised soil around the edge of the planting hole to form a basin to catch and hold water.
9. Water thoroughly to settle the soil around the plant.
10. Mulch up to the edge of the root ball. Do not mulch against the stem as this may cause collar rot.

Ongoing maintenance

Gardens planted with indigenous plants generally require less maintenance than gardens planted with introduced plants.

Mulch

Top up your mulch as it breaks down. Remember not to mulch right up to the stem of your plants as this can cause diseases such as collar rot.

Watering

Indigenous plants generally need less water than introduced plants once they are established, but will need regular watering while they are young.

Water in the evening or early morning to prevent water evaporating before it reaches your plant roots.

Give your plants a slow, deep water at a rate that the soil can absorb the water.

Tree Guards

Protect young plants as they grow if they are at risk of being eaten or trodden on. Remove the tree guard and stakes once the plant has become established.

Pruning

Tip pruning involves pinching out the growing shoots forcing the plant to make new growth further back along the branch. This increases the number of flowers, makes the plant bushy and prevents it from becoming straggly. Tip pruning is best done after flowering and can be started when the plant is young.

If you don't have the patience for tip pruning, plants can also be cut back by about a third of their new growth in order to shape them.

Check with your local nursery for the recommended pruning of the plants you buy.

Always ensure your cutting tools are sharp to prevent tearing the bark.

Clean your tool blades by wiping them with eucalyptus oil before moving between plants to prevent potentially spreading disease.



Tree guard



Pruned shrubs

Natural pest control

Gardening with indigenous plants is a great reason to reduce your use of herbicides, pesticides and rodenticides. By growing a good diversity of plants and using non-chemical pest control you can usually control outbreaks of pests in your garden, and create healthier habitat.

To avoid issues

- Check your garden regularly for pests.
- Make sure plants are not planted too close together so there is good ventilation to prevent fungal diseases.
- Hand remove weeds when they are small.
- Attract natural predators to your garden. Create the right habitat and your garden will be jumping with ladybeetles and small birds feasting on garden pests.
- Attracting owls is a great natural way to manage pest rodents.



Common Spotted Ladybird eating aphids

Some home remedies

To deter **snails and slugs** there are a number of techniques to try.

- Place a ring of crushed eggshell, sawdust or coffee grounds around your plants.
- Provide safe accommodation for hungry blue-tongued lizards.
- After dark, don your gloves and a torch and handpick them off your plants.
- Snails and slugs, especially after rain, will also tend to gather under an upturned pot for easy collection.

If **grasshoppers** are a problem, consider making a casuarina tea. Simmer 60 grams of dried casuarina needles for 20 minutes in water. Cool, strain and dilute 1 part concentrate to 40 parts of water. Spray directly onto foliage.

Garlic spray has broad application as an antifungal agent and as a repellent of **soft-bodied insects**. To make a garlic spray, add 2 tablespoons of crushed garlic to 1 litre of water. Let it stand overnight, strain and spray.

A tablespoon of molasses dissolved in 1 litre of warm water with a teaspoon of pure liquid soap is an effective spray for **caterpillars and other chewing pests**. Apply regularly to the leaves.

Attracting local wildlife

The following animals live in the Merri-bek area or pass through regularly. Many are under pressure from the loss, degradation and fragmentation of their habitat. You may see some of these animals in our local parks and reserves. You can help our unique wildlife by creating a wildlife-friendly garden that provides a wide range of food types, water and shelter.



Willy Wagtail at nest (NB)



Red-browed Finch



Superb Fairy-wren



Red-capped Robin (NBr)

Attracting small birds

Small birds help control insects, recycle nutrients and disperse seeds. Birds such as pardalotes, robins, wrens, fantails and thornbills feed on insects. Finches and silvereys feed on berries and seeds.

Recipe:

- Provide a shallow dish of fresh water in an elevated position near a prickly or dense shrub.
- Create open areas for foraging.
- Mulch garden beds to attract tasty insect treats.
- Practise natural pest control (pg 34).
- Plant dense or prickly shrubs for protection and safe nesting sites.
- Prune shrubs to create a denser form.
- Plant a range of plants including prickly wattles, tea-trees, correas grasses and climbers.
- Keep cats and where possible dogs inside, especially at night.

Threats:

- Carnivorous birds and territorial birds such as Noisy Miners and the introduced Common Myna.
- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Pesticides.
- Lack of habitat.



Small birds

Look for the small bird icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for small birds.

Attracting honeyeaters

Honeyeaters are very active birds that need a rich supply of nectar and pollen-producing flowers to keep them fuelled. They have a brush-tongue they use to collect nectar and pollen. Honeyeaters can be protective of a good supply of food and quite aggressive towards other nectar feeders. They also need insects in their diet so, despite their name, don't be surprised if you see them snapping at some bugs.

Recipe:

- Include a shallow dish of fresh water in an elevated safe position for bathing and drinking.
- Practise natural pest control (pg 34).
- Plant dense or prickly small and large shrubs for protection and safe nesting sites.
- Plant a range of nectar-producing plants that flower across the seasons.
- Keep cats and where possible dogs inside, especially at night.

Threats:

- Carnivorous birds and territorial honeyeaters such as Noisy Miners and the introduced Indian Myna.
- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Pesticides.
- Lack of habitat.



Honeyeaters

Look for the honeyeater icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for honeyeaters.



Juvenile White-eared Honeyeater



New Holland Honeyeater



Eastern Spinebill



Galah (MP)



Crimson Rosella



Gang-gang Cockatoo (NB)

Attracting parrots

Parrots feed on a wide variety of plants. Nectar-feeders such as the Musk Lorikeet, have a brush-tongue to collect nectar and pollen. Seed-eaters such as Red-rumped Parrots, feed on wattles, banksias, eucalypts and grasses. Long-billed Corellas dig in the ground for tubers. Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos love to find grubs hiding under tree bark and crack open seed pods and wooden fruits to extract seeds.

Recipe:

- Include a source of fresh water, especially for the seed-eating parrots that become very thirsty.
- Plant a range of nectar, pollen and seed-producing plants.
- Add a tall tree for perching, roosting and nesting.
- Keep tree hollows for birds to nest in or install species appropriate nest boxes.
- Practise natural pest control (pg 34).
- Keep your pets inside at night.

Threats:

- Carnivorous birds and territorial birds such as Noisy Miners.
- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Lack of habitat, especially hollows.
- Pesticides (grain-based mouse and rat bait).
- Introduced Common Myna and European Honey Bees that use hollows.



Parrots

Look for the parrot icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for parrots.

Attracting large birds

Birds such as Tawny Frogmouths, Australian Magpies, owls, eagles, Laughing Kookaburras and butcherbirds are carnivorous and feed on small mammals, lizards and large insects. A few large birds, such as the Common Bronzewing and Crested Pigeon are seed-eaters that mainly feed on grass seeds.

Recipe:

- Provide a source of fresh water for birds to bathe in and drink.
- Include a few tall trees for perching, roosting and nesting.
- Keep tree hollows for larger birds or install species appropriate nest boxes.
- Practise natural pest control (pg 34).
- Keep cats and where possible dogs inside, especially at night.

Threats:

- Other carnivorous birds.
- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Pesticides that may cause primary poisoning from eating grain-based mouse and rat bait or secondary poisoning from eating poisoned animals.
- Lack of habitat, especially large tree hollows for owls.



Large birds

Look for the large bird icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for large birds.



Laughing Kookaburra



Common Bronzewing (BP)



Tawny Frogmouth (M)



Australian Painted Lady Butterfly (IM)



Common Grass-blue Butterfly



Yellow Admiral Butterfly



Butterflies

Look for the butterfly icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for butterflies.

Attracting butterflies

Butterflies will move over large distances to find nectar-producing plants (e.g. daisies, banksias and wattles) to feed on and host plants to lay their eggs (e.g. grasses, wattles, gahnia and bursaria).

Recipe:

- Incorporate a range of plant sizes that cater for butterflies that fly at various heights, as different species will fly around grasses, groundcovers, shrubs or mature trees.
- Add a dish of damp sand. Butterflies take in water and essential salts and minerals from the soil.
- Include a flat rock or paver for butterflies to bask in the morning sun.
- Butterflies are not strong fliers. Provide protected areas where they can shelter from wind and rain. Messy patches are great!
- Practise natural pest control (Pg 34).
- Plant a range of host plants for different butterflies to lay their eggs on. For example Australian Painted Lady Butterflies everlasting daisies, while Common Grass-blue Butterflies prefer plants in the pea family such as Purple Coral-pea and Austral Indigo.

Threats:

- Insecticides.
- Lack of habitat.

Attracting other invertebrates

Native invertebrates such as bees, ladybirds, ants, moths, beetles, hover flies, lacewings and dragonflies benefit the environment and health of your garden in many ways. They are our plant pollinators, our pest eaters, our waste recyclers and an important source of food for many native birds, frogs, lizards, mammals and other invertebrates such as spiders and praying mantids. Most spiders in the garden are harmless to people and are excellent controllers of unwanted pests.

Pollinator insects include many species of native bees, butterflies, moths, flies, wasps, hover flies, beetles, thrips and some ants.

Recipe:

- Provide water that is accessible for invertebrates that can't swim. They need to stand on the edge of a plant or floating material. A shallow dish with pebbles also works well.
- Leave some messy patches in your garden.
- Use bush mulch on your garden beds.
- Practice natural pest control (pg 34).
- Add an 'insect hotel'.
- Plant grasses and rushes for egg-laying pollinators. Examples include Kangaroo Grass, Mat-rush and Flax-lilies.
- Plant a range of different plants that flower across the seasons.

Threats:

- Insecticides.
- Lack of habitat.



Chequered Cuckoo-bee



Hover fly



Fiddler Beetle



Insect pollinators

Look for the bee icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for invertebrate pollinators.

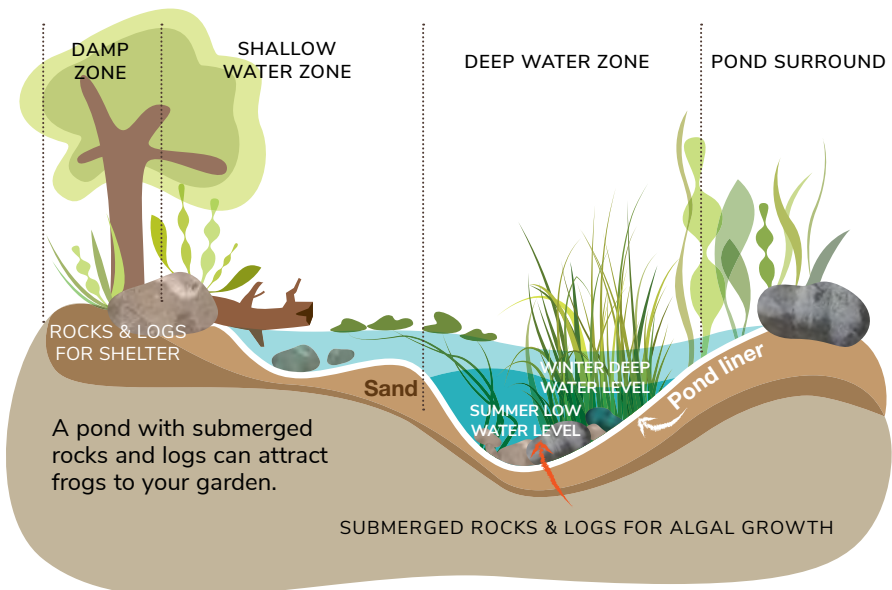
Attracting frogs

Frogs need water to lay their eggs and for tadpoles to grow into frogs. Tadpoles feed on algae and decaying vegetable matter. Frogs spend their non-breeding life away from water and eat insects. They are actually very quiet during this time. You have two options for attracting frogs to your garden. One is to build a frog pond that will attract breeding frogs. Males will sing their chorus from the pond to attract a female, where she will join him and lay her eggs. The second option if you have a moist, shady area in your garden is to create a frog hide-away for non-breeding frogs to burrow under a log or mulch and quietly hop about feeding.

Recipe for a frog pond:

- Locate your pond in a low-lying section of your garden that has 70% shade.
- Avoid locating your frog pond under trees which may drop leaves.
- Ensure your pond includes shallow entry points and deeper sections for potted aquatic plants.
- Add rocks and logs and cover the bottom with gravel.
- Fill with rainwater or tap water (chlorinated tap water needs to stand for 5 days).
- Add a variety of indigenous aquatic and semi-aquatic plants as well as plants that thrive in moist soil
- Practice natural pest control (pg 34).
- Keep pets indoors or prevent them from entering your pond surround.
- Avoid pumps and do not add fish.

Cross-section of frog pond



Endangered



Growling Grass Frog (MQ)



Southern Brown Tree frog (JB)



Pobblebonk (JB)



Striped Marsh Frog (IM)

Recipe for a frog hide-away:

- Find a moist, shady area in a quiet part of your garden.
- Provide shelter such as logs with holes and loose bark or rocks.
- Plant lots of groundcovers, grasses and small shrubs.
- Add chunky wood-based mulch.

Threats:

- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Carnivorous birds.
- Lack of habitat.



Common Eastern Froglet (AP)



Frogs

Look for the frog icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for frogs.



Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard (NI)



Southern Marbled Gecko (WM)



Common Garden Skink



Blotched Blue-tongued Lizard (JB)

Attracting reptiles

Blue-tongued lizards, Marbled Geckos and little Garden Skinks generally prefer to snack on insects, but are opportunists that will also eat berries and seeds. Avoid using snail baits, even pet-friendly ones can harm wildlife. Many an Eastern Blue-tongued Lizard has unfortunately died after eating either the snail bait or the dead snails.

Recipe:

- Flat rocks, pavers or roof tiles positioned in a protected, sunny spot provides a place for reptiles to warm up.
- Mulch garden beds to attract insects for them to eat.
- Practise natural pest control (pg 34).
- Include a fresh, shallow water supply on the ground.
- Plant tussock grasses for protection.
- Provide cool shelter such as dense shrubs.
- Keep cats and where possible dogs inside, especially at night.

Threats:

- Carnivorous birds.
- Cats and dogs living outside.
- Pesticides.
- Lack of habitat.



Reptiles

Look for the lizard icon in the Plants of Merri-bek section (pp 45-55) for plants that provide food and shelter for lizards, skinks and geckos.

Plants of Merri-bek

This section features plants that are locally native in the City of Merri-bek. By planting these in your garden you will be supporting local biodiversity. The icons below are matched with each plant to indicate the types of wildlife they may attract and the conditions they require.

Wildlife



Small birds such as wrens, finches, wagtails, pardalotes and thornbills.



Honeyeaters such as spinebills, friarbirds, wattlebirds and honeyeaters.



Parrots such as rosellas, lorikeets and cockatoos.



Large birds such as owls and kookaburras.



Insect pollinators such as native bees, hover flies and native wasps.



Butterflies such as swordtails and skippers, and moths such as loopers.



Frogs such as the Spotted Marsh Frog.



Reptiles such as skinks, geckos and lizards.



Mammals such as microbats, Grey-headed Flying-fox, possums, gliders and echidnas.

Plant conditions

Sun requirements



FULL SUN



PART SUN/
SHADE



SHADE

Water requirements



LOW



MEDIUM



HEAVY

Suitable for a pot



Please note: all plant sizes mentioned in this publication are approximate. Environmental conditions will influence the mature height and width of a plant.

Common Tussock-grass | *Poa labillardieri*

- A fast growing tussock that grows to 0.5–1m high and wide.
- Delicate flowerheads from October to February.
- Requires cutting back every few years to dethatch old growth.
- Prefers moist to slightly dry soils.

Feather Spear-grass | *Austrostipa elegantissima*

- An ornamental grass tussock with bright green leaves.
- Grows to 0.5-1m high and 2m wide.
- Flowers from September to November.
- At maturity flowers a shimmery silver mound.
- Extra water in summer will keep plants flowering.

Flax-lilies | *Dianella* spp.

- Grows to 1m high and 2m wide.
- Blue star-shaped flowers from September to January.
- Flowers attract native Blue-banded Bees.
- Shiny blue berries follow flowering.
- Prefers well-drained sand and loam soil.

Kangaroo Grass | *Themeda triandra*

- An attractive plant, particularly when mass planted.
- Grows to 30cm–1m high and 20–60cm wide.
- Decorative flowerheads held above foliage from September to March.
- Will tolerate most soils but performs best in well-drained soils.

Spiny-headed Mat-rush | *Lomandra longifolia*

- A fast-growing plant for difficult areas.
- Grows to 0.5–1m high and 0.5–1.2m wide.
- Clusters of yellow-purple flowers from September to December.
- Well-drained soils.
- An important food plant for the larvae of numerous butterflies.

Austral Stork's-bill | *Pelargonium australe*

- A fast-growing plant for rockeries and small gardens.
- Grows to 30-60cm high and 30cm-1m wide.
- Attractive pink flowers from October to February.
- Prefers well-drained soils.

Bulbine Lily | *Bulbine bulbosa*

- An attractive plant, particularly when mass planted.
- Grows to 30cm high and wide.
- Masses of bright yellow flowers from September to January.
- Dies back to tuber during dormant periods.

Chocolate Lily | *Arthropodium strictum*

- A rosette of grassy leaves 30–40cm high and wide.
- Chocolate-scented flowers from October to December.
- Copes with heavy basalt soil.
- Dies back after flowering until the following autumn.

Climbing Saltbush | *Chenopodium nutans*

- A hardy plant that scrambles over rocks and plants.
- Easily cut back if smothering other plants.
- Tiny flowers followed by attractive small red or yellow berries in summer and autumn.
- Dry, well-drained soils.

Common Billy Buttons | *Craspedia variabilis*

(RR)



(JBD)



- Spectacular in flower and mass planted.
- Grows to 15-60cm high and 0.5-1m wide.
- Rosette of narrow olive-green leaves.
- Single, round, yellow flowerheads held on long stalks from September to November.
- Adaptable to most soils.
- An excellent dried flower.

Cut-leaf Daisy | *Brachyscome multifida*

- Fast-growing plant with a long flowering period.
- Grows to 10-40cm high and 0.2-1m wide.
- Variable flower colour from mauve, pink or white.
- Flowers most of the year peaking in spring and summer.

Drumsticks | *Pycnosorus globosus*

- Stunning when planted on mass.
- Grows from 20-90cm high and wide.
- Woolly silvery-grey linear leaves.
- Unique ball-like flowerheads from November to February.
- Grows well in heavy clay soils.
- Cut flowers hold their colour.

Everlastings | *Chrysocephalum* spp.

- Grows to 30cm high and 1-2m wide.
- Dense clusters of bright yellow flowerheads from September to February.
- Responds well to a hard prune after flowering.
- Well-drained sand and loam soils.

Kidney Plant | *Dichondra repens*

(LP)



- A creeping groundcover that forms a dense mat of leaves.
- Prefers moist, well-drained soil.
- An excellent lawn substitute in low traffic areas.

Milky Beauty-heads | *Calocephalus lacteus*

(TC)



- A sprawling plant suitable for mass planting.
- Grows 15-50cm high and 10-30cm wide.
- Soft grey leaves.
- White round or oblong flowerheads from November to February.

Ruby Saltbush | *Enchylaena tomentosa*

- Low spreading plant that grows to 1m wide.
- Bluish-green succulent leaves.
- Small yellow to red fruit from September to April.
- Very adaptable tolerating poor soils and dryness.

Running Postman | *Kennedia prostrata*

- An attractive, trailing groundcover.
- Grows well in containers or hanging baskets.
- Showy flowers from August to November.
- Prefers dry, well-drained, gravelly soils.
- Provides shelter and food in the form of nectar, pollen, leaves and seed.

Sticky Everlasting | *Xerochrysum viscosum*

- Grows to 20–90cm high and 30cm–1m wide.
- Showy, bright-yellow flowers from August to March.
- Well-drained soils.
- Pruning after flowering encourages bushiness.

Tufted Bluebell | *Wahlenbergia capillaris*

- Masses of flowers, peaking October to March.
- Grows 20-50cm high and wide.
- Prune after flowering and provide additional water in summer.
- Well-drained soils, tolerates some dryness once established.

Purple Coral-pea | *Hardenbergia violacea*

- An attractive fast-growing creeper that provides excellent protection for small birds.
- Can be trained on a trellis or over a retaining wall.
- Showy purple flowers from July to November.

Small-leaved Clematis | *Clematis microphylla*

- A vigorous climber that provides excellent protection for small birds.
- Can be trained to cover a fence or trellis.
- Produces masses of fragrant, starry flowers from July to December.
- Attractive feathery seedheads after flowering.

Austral Indigo | *Indigofera australis*

- An attractive, fast-growing shrub.
- Grows to 1–2m high and wide.
- Beautiful mauve flowers from September to December.
- Adaptable, but prefers a sheltered position in dry, well-drained soils.
- Suitable for sandy soils.

Common Correa | *Correa reflexa*

- Variable plant in form and flower colour.
- Grows to 0.3-2m high and 1-2m wide.
- Dull green leaves, rough on top and hairy underneath.
- Red, bell-shaped flowers from March to September.
- An excellent shrub for dry shady positions.

Grey Parrot-pea | *Dillwynia cinerascens*

- Grows to 1.5m tall and wide.
- Ideal plant for a difficult dry shady position in the garden.
- Yellow and orange flowers from July to November.
- Responds well to pruning after flowering.

Hop Goodenia | *Goodenia ovata*

- A fast-growing shrub.
- Responds well to pruning after flowering to maintain a compact form.
- Grows to 2m high and wide.
- Attractive bright-yellow flowers from August to February.

Rock Correa | *Correa glabra*

- A hardy shrub that grows to 1–3m high and wide.
- Bell-like flowers appearing from February to September.
- Grows in dry, well-drained soils.
- Responds well to hard pruning after flowering.

Rosemary Grevillea | *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*

- Dense growth habit and stiff foliage provides excellent bird habitat.
- Grows to 30cm–2m high and wide.
- Prolific red and white flowers peaking from June to September.
- Well-drained soils.

Gold Dust Wattle | *Acacia acinacea*

- A fine-leaved wattle with gently arching stems.
- Grows to 0.5–2.5m high and 2–4m wide.
- Profusion of flowers from August to November.
- Well-drained soils.

Hedge Wattle | *Acacia paradoxa*

- A fast-growing dense and prickly shrub.
- An ideal refuge for small birds.
- Grows 2–4m high and wide.
- Golden-yellow flowers from August to November.
- Dry to moist well-drained soils.

Large Kangaroo-apple | *Solanum laciniatum*

- Fast-growing shrub that benefits from pruning.
- Grows 1–3m high and 1–3m wide.
- Attractive purple flowers September to March.
- Distinctive yellow-orange berries.
- All well-drained soils.

River Bottlebrush | *Callistemon sieberi*

- A large, weeping shrub that responds well to pruning.
- Grows 3–10m high and 2–6m wide.
- Cream of pink flowers from November to May.
- Very adaptable but prefers moist to wet conditions.
- Will tolerate drying out.

Sweet Bursaria | *Bursaria spinosa*

- Slow-growing tree to 2–6m high and 2–3m wide.
- Masses of fragrant flowers from October to February.
- Prefers dry, well-drained soils.
- Can be pruned for hedging.

Wedge-leaf Hop-bush | *Dodonaea viscosa* ssp. *cuneata*


- Dense spreading shrub.
- Grows to 1-3m high and wide.
- Wedge-shaped green leaves.
- Tiny flowers from August to November followed by showy red to brown fruit capsules with papery wings.

Woolly Tea-tree | *Leptospermum lanigerum*


- Grows to 2-6m high and 1-3m wide.
- Greyish-green leaves with attractive silver new growth.
- Masses of white flowers from September to January.
- Regular pruning encourages a dense shrub.
- Interesting fibrous bark on main branches.

Blackwood | *Acacia melanoxylon*


- A fast-growing tree with a dense canopy.
- Grows 5-30m high and 4-15m wide.
- Cream, ball-shaped flowers from July to October.
- Grows best in deep, moist soil, but is adaptable.
- Tolerates some dryness once established.

Drooping Sheoak | *Allocasuarina verticillata*


- Fast-growing and graceful tree.
- Grows to 4-11m high and 3-6m wide.
- Male flowers from March to December produce a golden effect.
- Drought tolerant once established.

Lightwood | *Acacia implexa*


- Grows to 5-15m high and 4-7m wide.
- Cream flowers from October to November.
- Thrives in dry, sunny spots with shallow soil.
- Will also tolerate moist, well-drained soil types.

Melbourne Yellow Gum | *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* ssp. *connata*


- An upright tree with spreading crown.
- Grows 10-20m high and 6-20m wide.
- Profuse cream flowers from May to September.
- Well-drained soil, tolerating dryness once established.

Silver Banksia | *Banksia marginata*


- Striking feature tree or screening plant.
- Grows to 1-6m high and 1-4m wide.
- Yellow flower cones from February to June.
- Prefers well-drained soils but tolerates wet conditions.

Yellow Box | *Eucalyptus melliodora*


- An attractive long-lived tree that supports multiple wildlife.
- Grows to 10-30m high and 8-25m wide.
- Perfumed, cream flowers from September-February.
- Well-drained, deep soils.

Common weed species

While introduced or 'exotic' plants can be useful for shade, structure, colour and interest in the garden, they also make up the vast majority of Australia's invasive weeds, including many aquatic and semi aquatic plants used in ponds and aquariums.

Some Australian plants are also environmental weeds and should be avoided. For example Bluebell Creeper (*Billardiera heterophylla*) from Western Australia was sold as a popular native plant that is now aggressively invading bushland around Victoria.

Weeds are a problem because they out-compete indigenous plants for light, water and nutrients. In a short period of time they can change local ecosystems so that the habitat no longer supports native wildlife.

Disposal of weeds

When removing weeds be sure to target their removal **BEFORE** they set seed. This is particularly important with grass species. Seek advice on how to best remove problem weeds.

Once you have removed a weed from your garden the question then becomes, how do you safely dispose of the plant material so that it does not spread into natural areas?

There are a number of options from using your kerbside green waste bin to recycling your weed material at home.

Compost: you can add non-seed bearing plant material to your compost bin. In many situations compost is simply not hot enough to destroy weed seeds.

Weed seeds and cuttings can be carried many kilometres by water, wind, birds, other animals, vehicles and on clothing. Weeds also spread from dumped garden waste in bushland and waterways.

To the right are examples of a few garden plants that have become weeds.

For information on the identification and control of weeds visit <https://friendsofmerricreek.org.au/weeds>.

Weed Tea: collect weeds in a mesh bag before they set seed and submerge them in a bucket of water. Leave your 'tea' to brew for 5 to 6 weeks or until your weeds have turned into a brown sludge. Remove your 'teabag' and compost. Dilute one part tea to ten parts water to create an excellent fertiliser for your plants.

Solarisation: pile weeds up in a sunny spot and cover them with secured black plastic, then dispose in your green waste bin or compost.

Weed: characteristics, dispersal and removal

African Lily | *Agapanthus* spp.



- Spread by seed and dumped garden waste.
- Hand-weed small plants.
- Cut off flower heads before they set seed.
- Dig out large plants including root mass.

Blue Periwinkle | *Vinca major*



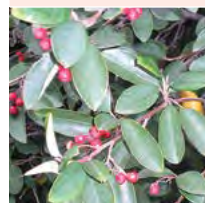
- Spread by plant parts taking root.
- All parts of the plant must be removed including leaves, stems and roots.

Broom | *Genista* spp.



- Seeds spread by animals, water and dumped garden waste.
- Hand-weed small plants.
- Slash/brush-cut larger plants before they seed.

Cotoneaster | *Cotoneaster* spp.



- Birds feast on the fruit spreading seed as do foxes.
- Hand-weed small plants.
- Slash/brush-cut larger plants before they seed.

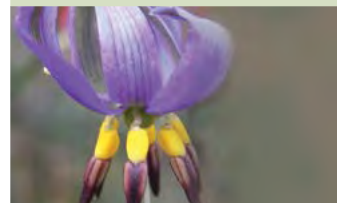
English Ivy | *Hedera helix*



- Seeds spread by birds and foxes.
- Root fragments reshoot.
- Hand-weed small plants including roots.
- Slash/brush-cut larger plants before they seed.

Replacement

Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella revoluta*



Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*



Gold Dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea*



Wedge-leaf Hop-bush *Dodonea viscosa cuneata*



Small-leaved Clematis *Clematis microphylla*



Weed: characteristics, dispersal and removal

Fountain Grass | *Cenchrus setaceus*



- Forms dense stands in the understorey that can exclude all other plants.
- This species reproduces by seed.
- Small infestations can be dug out

Galenia | *Galenia pubescens*



- Seeds spread by animals, wind, water and dumped garden waste.
- Hand-removal
- Dig out.

Mirror Bush | *Coprosma repens*



- Seeds spread by animals and dumped garden waste.
- Branches touching the ground will root.
- Hand-weed small plants.
- Slash/brush-cut larger plants.

Morning Glory | *Ipomoea indica*



- Forms dense stands in the understorey that can exclude all other plants.
- This species reproduces by seed.
- Small infestations can be dug out.

Moth Vine | *Araujia sericifera*



- Seed spread by wildlife, machinery and on clothing.
- Hand remove small plants.
- Cut larger vines and dig out the roots.

Replacement

Feather Spear-grass *Austrostipa elegantissima*



Bidgee-widgee *Acaena novae-zelandiae*



Golden Wattle *Acacia pycnantha*



Purple Coral-pea *Hardenbergia violacea*



Small-leaved Clematis *Clematis microphylla*



Weed: characteristics, dispersal and removal

Prickly Pear | *Opuntia* spp.



- Seed spread by animals, water and dumped garden waste.
- Plant segments will root.
- Hand-removal most effective method but protection from spines needed.

Salsify | *Trapogon porrifolius*



- Seed spread by wind.
- Remove by carefully levering up the central tap root.

Sweet Pittosporum | *Pittosporum undulatum*



- Seed spread by birds and animals.
- Hand remove small plants.
- Dig out larger plants.

Wandering Trad | *Tradescantia fluminensis*



- Spread by plant parts taking root and seed dispersal.
- Remove whole plant including roots.

Wild Tobacco Tree | *Solanum mauritianum*



- Seeds spread by animals and dumped garden waste.
- Hand-weed small plants.
- Slash/brush-cut larger plants.

Replacement

Sweet Bursaria *Bursaria spinosa*



Black-anther Flax-lily *Dianella revoluta*



Lightwood *Acacia implexa*



Bidgee-widgee *Acaena novae-zelandiae*



Tree Violet *Melicytus dentatus*



Wildlife of Merri-bek

The following animals live in Merri-bek or pass through regularly, and can be seen in our parks and reserves. Many are under pressure from habitat loss, habitat degradation and habitat fragmentation. You can help our unique wildlife by creating a wildlife-friendly garden.



White-plumed Honeyeater (NB)



Black-shouldered Kite (CL)



Little Pied Cormorant



White-faced Heron



White-browed Scrub-wren



Common Ringtail Possum (GA)



Silvereye



Eastern Long-neck Turtle (JB)



Blue Skimmer Dragonfly (AK)



Dainty Swallowtail (RR)



Rakali (IM)



Lesser Long-eared Bat (JB)



Swamp Wallaby (CC)



Eastern Grey Kangaroo

Living with wildlife

Creating a wildlife-friendly garden supports a multitude of native wildlife that is often under pressure to survive. Occasionally we encounter a few challenges with wildlife in our gardens that can usually be managed.

Expert help

If you find sick or injured wildlife, be aware of your surroundings and safety particularly around busy roads. If possible, approach with care and remove any threats to the animal. Call Wildlife Victoria on (03) 8400 7300 for advice.

Netting

Nylon netting is a popular way to protect fruit and vegetables in our garden, but the wrong type of netting can trap and kill wildlife.

Victorian regulation requires you to only use netting with a mesh size less than 5mm x 5mm. As a rough guide, if you can insert your finger through the mesh it is capable of trapping wildlife.

Also ensure the net is tight over the tree and fixed snugly around the trunk to prevent animals getting in. Check netted trees daily to ensure nets remain tight and animals are not trapped.



Grey-headed Flying-fox trapped in inappropriate netting.

Responsible pet ownership

Domestic cats and dogs are a significant threat to native wildlife. It is important to:

- confine you pet to your property with secure fencing or a cat run
- kennel or keep your pet inside at night
- walk your dog on a leash and only let them run at an off-leash park.

For more information visit <https://merri-bek.vic.gov.au/exploring-merri-bek/parks-and-gardens/find-a-park/>

Rodent bait

A poisoned rodent can still be active for a few days. If eaten by native wildlife like owls, magpies and eagles they can be highly poisonous to that animal. This causes secondary poisoning and can result in death.

Try to use trapping techniques, like cage traps or electric traps, that are unlikely to harm these native animals.



Barn Owl eating a mouse (RT)

Lighting

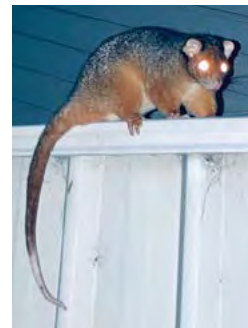
Many of our native wildlife from possums, owls, moths, bats and invertebrates are nocturnal. While artificial light helps humans move and travel safely at night, inappropriate, excessive or poorly designed light can disrupt animal behaviour and affect their health.

Light pollution can mimic, mask or confuse natural light signals. This can result in wildlife experiencing:

- disrupted activity and breeding
- disturbed sleep and wake rhythms
- disorientation and poor navigation
- attraction to artificial lights
- encounters with new predators
- reduced survival and reproduction.

To reduce light pollution in your garden:

- light only the area needed
- use low-intensity lighting and keep it close to the ground
- use non-reflective, dark-coloured surfaces near light fixtures
- Use amber lights rather than white light
- install sensor lights
- close curtains when using lights inside.



Ringtail Possum (DV)



Powerful Owl (NW)

Avoid supplementary feeding

Tempting as it may be to put out seed for parrots, meat for magpies or nectar for honeyeaters, you may be causing them more harm than good.

Feeding wildlife can:

- Cause dependency, health problems and malnutrition
- increase the spread of diseases from unclean feeding stations and close contact amongst populations
- attract predators like snakes, cats and other carnivores
- disrupt natural population balances.

Rather than artificially feeding wildlife, plant lots of food-producing native plants and provide a good supply of clean, fresh water.

Deter pests

Introduced pests such as Common Mynas are a threat to native birds due to their aggressive territorial behaviour. This includes competing for food, evicting native birds from nesting sites and killing chicks and eggs.

Foxes are a common night visitor to many backyards and will kill native birds and small mammals and overturn garbage bins.

You can discourage pest animals if you:

- feed pets indoors or don't leave food in their bowl
- ensure compost bins and rubbish bins are covered
- block holes in roofs and eaves once you've ensured they aren't already occupied.

Get involved

Community Groups

Merri-bek is fortunate to have many wonderful community groups working towards the shared vision of a healthy and vibrant ecosystem where we can live, work and play in harmony with nature.

From community planting days to bird surveys, there are many opportunities to get outdoors, connect with your neighbours and learn more about our unique native plants and animals.



You can find out how to get involved with friends groups, citizen science projects and community conservation events on our website

merri-bek.vic.gov.au/living-in-merri-bek/environment/nature/get-involved/

Gardens for Wildlife Merri-bek

Gardens for Wildlife helps residents enhance their gardens for habitat while connecting to nature and each other.

Volunteers passionate about our local environment share their knowledge with residents by visiting their garden and offering advice.

Whether you have a big backyard or some pots on your balcony, there is something everyone can do to contribute to urban biodiversity.



To register for a garden visit, join the Gardens for Wildlife community, or to find out about becoming a volunteer visit

conversations.merri-bek.vic.gov.au/gardens-wildlife-merri-bek



Other resources

Nurseries

Bili Nursery

525 Williamstown Road,
Port Melbourne.

☎ 0492 972 652

🌐 westgatebiodiversity.org.au

CERES

Crn Roberts & Stewart Streets,
Brunswick East.

☎ 9389 0100

🌐 ceres.org.au

Nangak Tamboree

La Trobe University,
Bundoora campus.

Access is via La Trobe Ave.

☎ 9479 1206

🌐 latrobe.edu.au/wildlife

Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-op (VINC)

Yarra Bend Rd,
Fairfield.

☎ 9482 1710

🌐 vinc.net.au

Apps

iNaturalist

eBird

Aussie Bird Count

Frog ID

Frog Census

TurtleSat.

Websites

Merri Creek Management Committee

mcmc.org.au

Birdlife Australia

birdlife.org.au

Sustainable Gardening Australia

sgaonline.org.au

Australian Plant Society

apsvic.org.au

Weeds Australia

weeds.org.au

Wildlife Victoria

wildlifevictoria.org.au

Further Reading

Australian Plant Society - Keilor Plains (2011) *Plants of Melbourne's Western Plains: A Gardener's Guide to the Original Flora*, 2nd Edition. APS Keilor Plains, Melbourne.

Bull, Marilyn (2014) *Flora of Melbourne: A Guide to the Indigenous Plants of the Greater Melbourne Area*, 4th Edition. Hyland House, Melbourne.

Cumpston, Zena, Fletcher, Michael-Shawn & Head, Lesley (2022) *First Knowledges Plants: Past, Present and Future*, Thames & Hudson Australia Pty Ltd, Melbourne.



Merri-bek
City Council

Merri-bek City Council

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9240 1111

Coburg Civic Centre

90 Bell St,
Coburg VIC 3058

Brunswick Customer Service Centre

233 Sydney Rd,
Brunswick VIC 3056

Glenroy Customer Service Centre

Glenroy Community Hub
50 Wheatsheaf Rd,
Glenroy VIC 3046

